

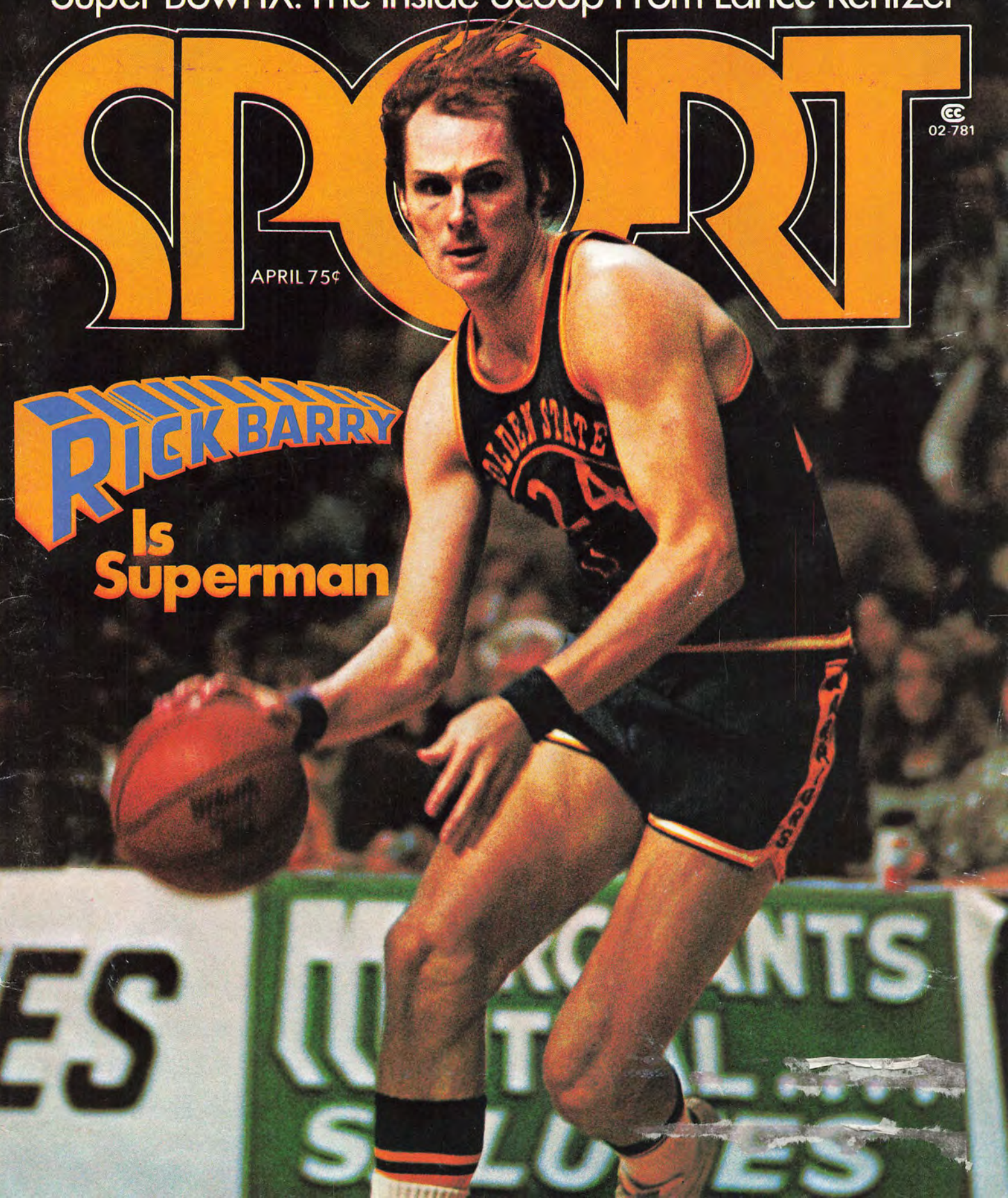
The Landing Of Catfish Hunter
Bill Sharman's Longest Season
Super Bowl IX: The Inside Scoop From Lance Rentzel

SPORT

APRIL 75¢

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Superman



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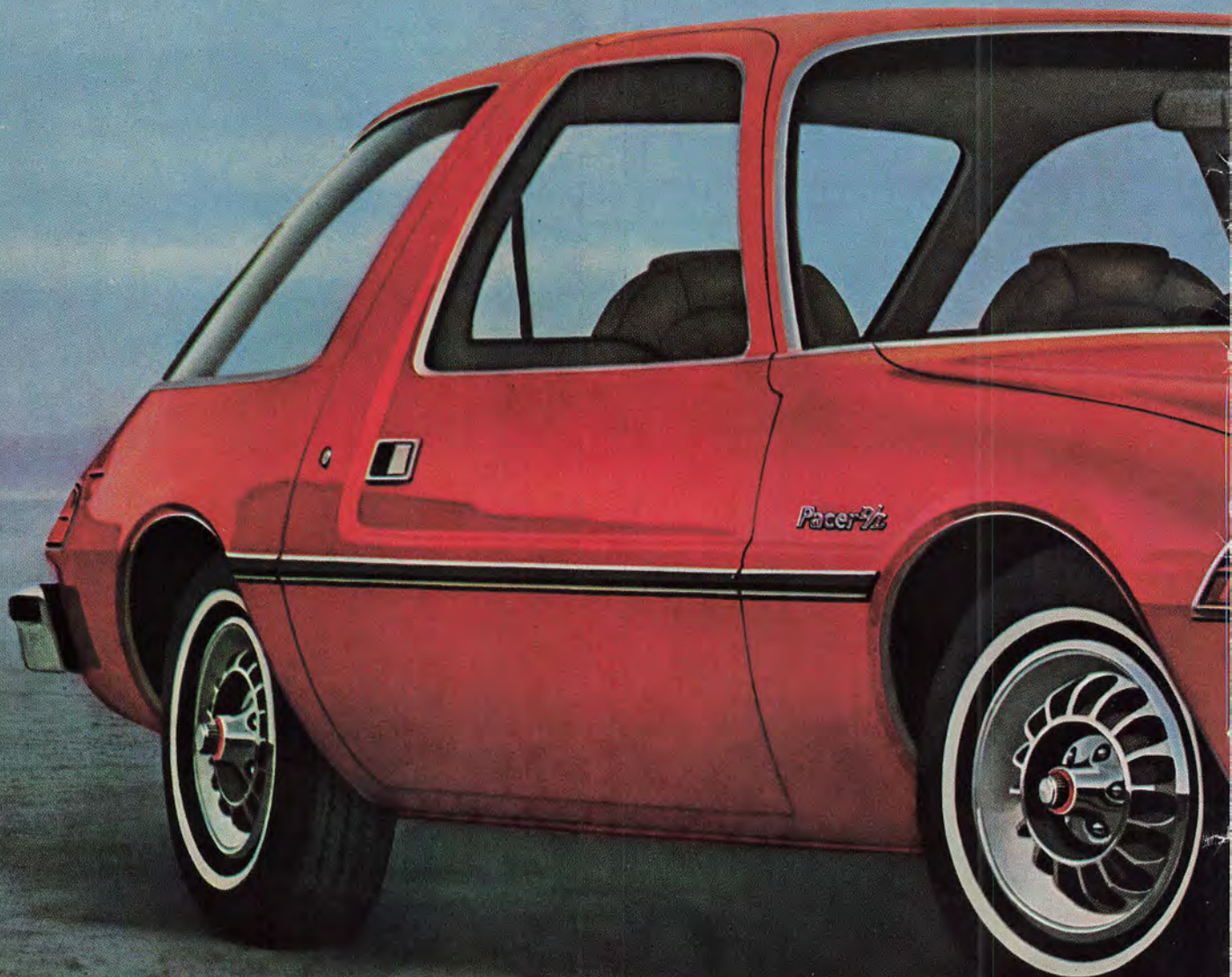
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SPORT

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GENUINE

GENUINE



APRIL THIS MONTH IN SPORT



JON TRONTZ

In 1973, Jon Trontz, the author of this month's story on the Los Angeles Kings, went to Chicago to cover a Stanley Cup game between the Black Hawks and the New York Rangers. He was on assignment for the *Christian Science Monitor*, but he was kicked out of the locker room. "No autographs in here, kid," he was told.

That was two years ago, and Trontz was very young, and looked even younger. He doesn't have such problems any more, now that he's older. Now Jon Trontz is 18.

"If the players give me any trouble," he says, "I just tell them, 'Look, I'm as good a writer as you are a hockey player.'"

The Kings story is Trontz' third for *SPORT*. Eventually, he'd like to cover a major-league hockey team fulltime—as both broadcaster and newspaperman. "I want to do the play-by-play, then sit down and pound out the story for the

morning paper," he says. No one has ever performed such a demanding double on a regular basis, but given Trontz' youthful energy, ego and talent, it's hard to bet against him.

Originally, Lance Rentzel had hoped to cover Super Bowl IX as a participant, but when the Minnesota Vikings spoiled that plan, Rentzel decided to go as a reporter. He also decided to bring along his friend and Los Angeles teammate, Fred Dryer, as an assistant. Dryer was still recovering from the Minnesota game. In that game, in the defensive huddle, a couple of Dryer's charged-up teammates kept saying, "There's no tomorrow . . . there's no tomorrow." Dryer, naturally, was very confused when he awoke the day after the game.

There was even a day after tomorrow, and on that day, Rentzel and Dryer went to see "The Front Page," the movie about newspapermen in the 1920s. Inspired, they rushed to a costume shop and rented 1920s outfits and 1920s equipment. Then, armed with their antique gear and a title suggested by Dryer ("There's No Tomorrow"), they set off to cover Super Bowl IX. And if you check their report carefully, you'll find a few lines straight out of "The Front Page."

Quick: Name a pro golfer whose first name is John, whose last name has six letters in it and who never worries about money.

If you said "John Miller," you're in the majority. But if you're Dan Gleason, who has been covering the golf tour for the past few years, you'd say, "John Jacobs." And you'd be right, too.

John Jacobs is sort of Johnny Miller in reverse—leading the tour not in income, but in outgo—and in this issue of *SPORT*, Gleason profiles the relatively unknown Jacobs. The last time Gleason covered an unknown for us, he became a known in a hurry: Rod Curl promptly won his first tournament, on his way to a \$100,000 season in 1974. Gleason hopes he jinxes Jacobs just as well.

Dick Schaap

SPORT



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SPORT TALK

BY DICK SCHAAP

ALL HAIL ALI

It was, above all else, a super party, and everyone who came—from the heavyweight champion of the world to the Most Valuable Player of Super Bowl IX, from the most gifted amateur athlete in the United States to the greatest rusher in the history of the Big Ten—everyone had a super time.

The occasion was a banquet honoring Muhammad Ali as SPORT's Performer of the Year for 1974, and more than 300 people packed the Terrace Ballroom of New York's Plaza Hotel. They came to pay their respect to—and, in one bold case, to hurl a challenge at—the guest of honor.

Ali, of course, dominated the affair, and George Foreman, in a way, made it all possible, but the tone of the evening was set by one of the speakers, Neil Simon, the playwright, the gifted author of *The Odd Couple*, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *God's Favorite* and a dozen other hits. "I want to say how much I respect and admire Muhammad Ali," said Simon, with an impish grin. "I would be crazy to say anything else standing this close to him."

It was exactly this blend of awe and wit that permeated the banquet, and Simon contributed more than his share of the wit. "Sitting between Franco Harris and Chuck Foreman," said Simon, opening his remarks, "I've decided to go to camp this summer." Simon allowed himself a small smile. "Chuck Foreman ate the whole roast beef off my plate," he said, "and I didn't say a word."

Foreman and Harris were only two of the athletes drawn to the affair, drawn mostly by the magic of Ali and partly because they, too, were being honored: Foreman as SPORT's Performer of the Year in pro football, Harris as MVP of the Super Bowl. Earlier in the day, SPORT had given a luncheon honoring

Harris alone for his accomplishment. He had received a plaque from SPORT and an MVP ring and a car of his choice from the American Motors Company. Harris mentioned that he had received an American Motors car two years earlier, when he was named rookie of the year in the National Football League, and he was happy to keep up the tradition. Harris was charming and modest in his remarks, expressing the wish that he could share the award and the occasion with all his Pittsburgh teammates. His mother, Gina Harris, who met Franco's father, Cad, when he was stationed in Italy during World War II, was charming, too, and vivacious. She was cheerful proof that Franco Harris was not only—rather surprisingly—the first black football player to be named MVP in Super Bowl history, but also the first Italian football player. Harris seems serious about staying in shape for the next football season; between the luncheon in his honor and the dinner in Ali's, he managed to work in a few sets of tennis at nearby Tennisport, playing with the publisher of SPORT, John Norwood.

At the dinner, Harris and Foreman were joined by a third football player, Ohio State's Archie Griffin, SPORT's choice as Performer of the Year in college football, and by an impressive collection of stars from other sports: Joanne Carner, the leading money-winner on the women's golf tour in 1974, SPORT's Performer of the Year in women's sports; Rick Wohlhuter, the world's finest middle-distance runner, named a few days later winner of the Sullivan Award, which is presented annually to the outstanding American amateur athlete, SPORT's Performer of the Year in track and field; Joe Torre, the former Most Valuable Player in the National League, now a New York Met, but on hand to accept

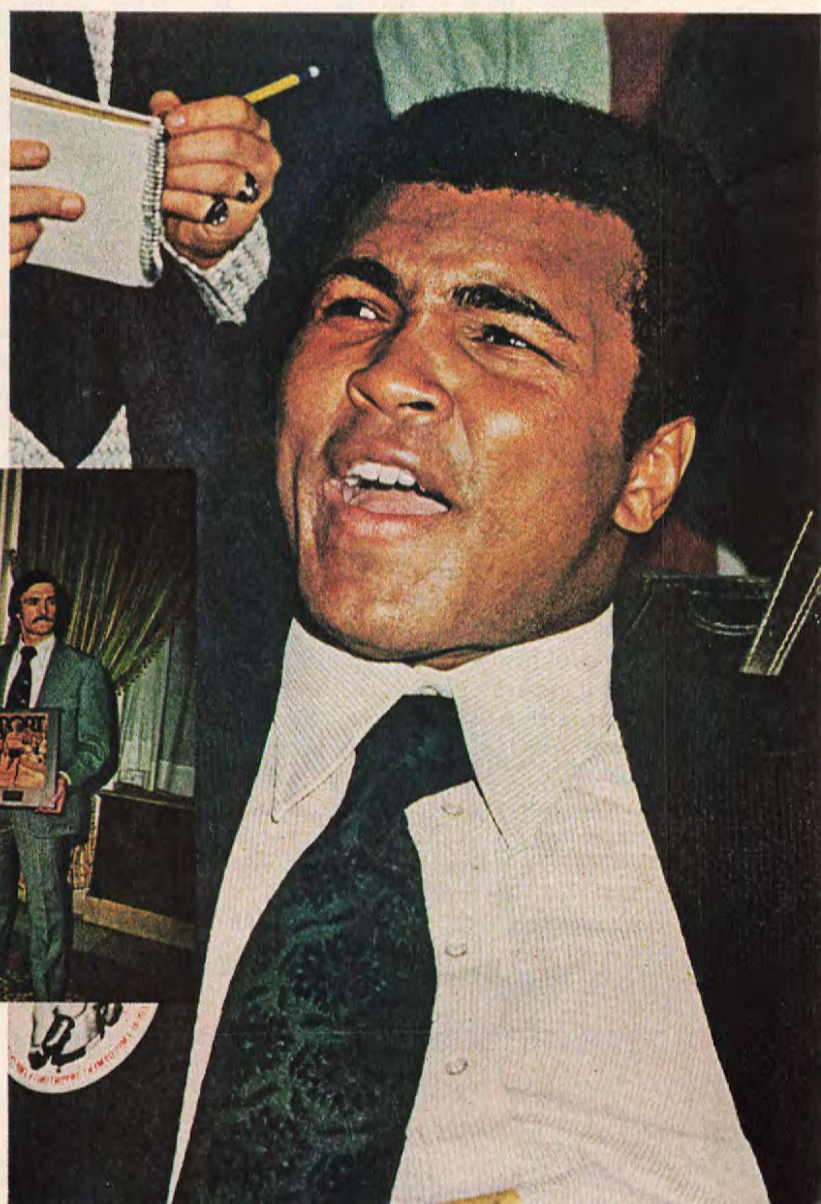
SPORT's Performer of the Year award in baseball for his former St. Louis Cardinal teammate, Lou Brock; and Barry Ashbee, the former Philadelphia Flyer whose career was cut short by an eye injury in the semi-final round of the 1974 Stanley Cup playoffs, on hand to accept SPORT's Performer of the Year award in hockey for his Flyer teammate, goalie Bernie Parent.

None of SPORT's other Top Performers could attend the dinner—Johnny Miller, for one, was busy making money; Jimmy Connors, for another, was busy making ready for Rod Laver—but the chance to glimpse and hear Ali drew a few top performers from show business. Cleavon Little, the star of *Blazing Saddles* stopped by before the evening performance of his Broadway play, *All Over Town*. Michael Moriarity, who portrayed the pitcher-author in *Bang the Drum Slowly* and is currently starring in *Report to the Commissioner*, came in quietly and positioned himself in the balcony to eavesdrop on the speeches. One of the speakers, who talked eloquently of the dignity of Muhammad Ali, was Melba Moore, the singer-actress who lit up Broadway in *Hair* and *Purlie*.

Even a member of the opposition came to honor Ali. George Plimpton, who contributes articles to *Sports Illustrated*, spoke briefly, mostly because, as he said, "There is very little to be said about this young man . . . that he hasn't already said himself . . . or won't say eventually."

The comic hit of the evening was a young man named Billy Crystal, who was introduced simply as "one of Muhammad Ali's oldest and dearest friends and supporters." No one in the audience knew who Crystal was; no one knew what he was going to say. He promptly launched into a devastatingly funny imitation of Howard Cosell interviewing Ali ("Is it all right if I call you 'Mo?'"), then did an equally deft impersonation of Ali answering Cosell ("Yeah, it's OK, but just don't call me Larry or Curly"). The little excerpts from

It was a big day for Franco Harris who had to make his choice of American Motors cars (top), and for Muhammad Ali (bottom, right) who found he had an opponent, Chuck Wepner (middle, left), who was actually capable of speech.



his routine don't do justice to Crystal's impressions; his words, his expressions, his nuances were exactly right.

Chuck Wepner was a surprise guest, and a surprise speaker, and he delivered a wonderfully funny impersonation of a prize fighter. Wepner, set to fight Ali in Cleveland, came armed—with a poem he had written. The rhyme was simple, and so was the message: Wepner was going to take the heavyweight championship of the world away from Ali. Muhammad laughed almost as hard at that routine as he did at Crystal's. "Whooo," said Ali, "I got me an opponent who can talk. I ain't never had an opponent before who could talk." Which left only the question of whether Ali had found, in the Bayonne Bleeder, an opponent who could fight.

Ali, as always, was the center of attraction, both at the banquet and at a mass news conference in between the Franco Harris luncheon and the dinner. Several of the other athletes came to the news conference, each prepared to offer his own views and experiences to the press, but they all wound up in the circle around Ali, listening and watching his blow-by-blow and word-by-word description of the George Foreman fight. "And, finally, George was out of gas," said Ali, "and there wasn't a station in sight."

At the end of the evening, when he was presented with his plaque as Performer of the Year in all sports, Ali came up with an unexpected suggestion: He offered to trade his own plaque for one designed for Henry Aaron, who was being honored, in absentia, with a Special Achievement Award marking 20 years of greatness. Ali said that he has great respect for Aaron because Aaron plays such a difficult game. "Boxing is easy," said Ali. "All you do is hit people."

The highlights of the banquet were presented in a half-hour show on WNBC-TV in New York two days after the affair. The program will be seen in Washington, D.C., on March 16 and in Los Angeles sometime in March. Billy Crystal's routine is offered in its entirety;

Ali's routine is not. No television show could be long enough to accommodate all of Ali.

THE CARIBBEAN LEAGUE

Chuck Wepner tuned up for Muhammad Ali by beating up one of SPORT's writers, Randy Neumann, a fighter-writer or writer-fighter, depending on his mood of the moment. Neumann wrote about his bloody defeat by Wepner in SPORT last year; after that bout, Neumann took nine months off from the ring, sharpened his syntax, sold a few freelance articles, then decided to box once more. His comeback came off recently in Nassau, in the Bahamas, and Neumann filed this report:

I had a bizarre feeling as the 747 touched down in Nassau. The rest of the passengers were on the island for a holiday; I had come to see if I could still answer the call of my youth. The promoter met me at the airport.

Marty Goldstein had all the trappings of a small-town promoter: Rumpled clothes, tousled hair, constant trips to phone booths. He sounded like one: "I'll level with you, kid. I'll talk to you like I knew you for 20 years." But no rube was this: He chauffeured me to the Britannia, a posh palace on Paradise Island, and not a downtown flea bag. The question of how a small-club promoter could afford such fancy digs was answered: "I got a connection here."

That will be Marty's epitaph.

There are worse places to be marooned than Paradise Island. I'd be hard-pressed to think of a better one. I arrived on a Wednesday morning for a Friday fight. At the airport, Marty said the fight "might" be pushed back a day. In the afternoon, he made it "definite" for Saturday. By evening, the fight was set for the following week. What could I do for a whole week? For openers, there was golf, tennis, swimming, girl-watching, gambling, water-skiing, sight-seeing and shopping.

It wasn't all fun and games. Running five miles on pink sand beats doing it on white snow, but it still ain't pleasure. Training on foreign soil may sound exotic, but it's tough when the ring is shaky, the heavy bag is light and the speed bag rack is loose. One bright spot in the work schedule was the advertising

campaign we did—for the fight and for Dewar's scotch and Beck's beer (two of Marty's "connections"). My mug was plastered all over the local papers, saying, "I always have on hand in my house. . . . It makes me the perfect host." If not quite the perfect Spartan, Marty wrote the copy.

The moment of truth drew near. Carl Baker, my Jamaican opponent, had the audacity not to show up at the noon weigh-in in the town square. "See," said Marty, "the guy's afraid of you." I knew better.

That night, at the arena, Marty turned to me and said, "Randy, when you get a chance, put the turn buckles in the ring. Here's the pliers and wire." Well, I knew it wasn't going to be Madison Square Garden. Then, after watching my opponent get his hands taped, I was standing in the locker room when a guy walked in holding a pair of trunks that said Dewar's scotch on them. "You wanna wear these?" the guy said.

"Why should I?" I said. "I've got my own with a monogram."

"'Cause you get fifty bucks for wearin' these."

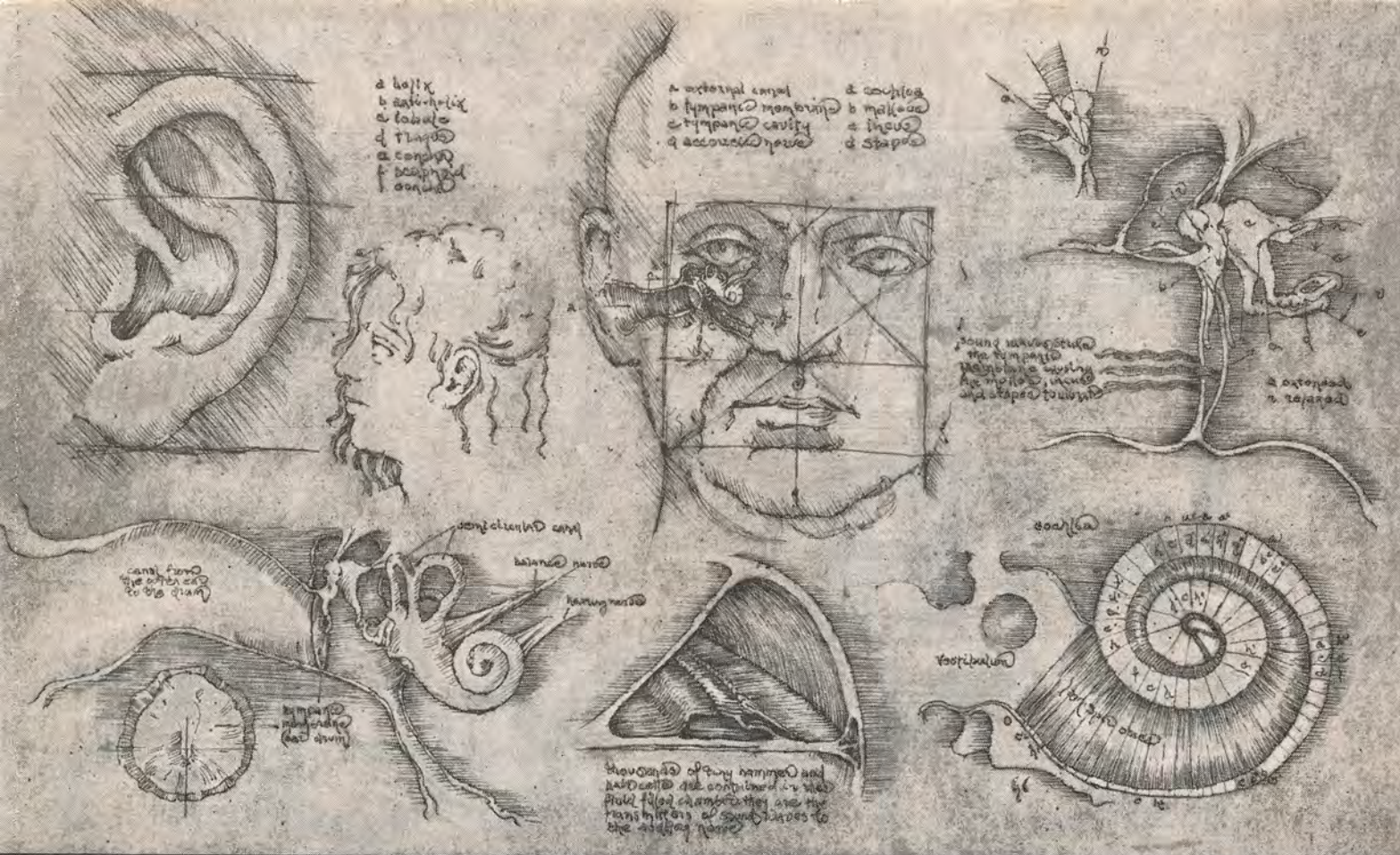
"Gimme those pants."

The house was sparse, but those on hand thoroughly enjoyed the prelims: Two wrestling matches and an amateur fight. Then came the main event: I came out firing because everyone on the island had assured me that Carl Baker wouldn't last two rounds.

By the tenth round, I was ahead, but Baker was still standing. He came out fighting, left himself wide open and ran into something. As soon as he hit the floor, four hands shot into the ring with towels, water, smelling salts, the works. I stormed across the ring, stomped the first available hand and kicked the other second clear out of the ring. The count was about 20 when the bewildered referee raised my hand. I extended my other to my opponent on the floor.

My boxing career was going again. I had a one-fight winning streak. The day I left Nassau, I called Marty to remind him that he still owed me some money for the advertising. His last line was a classic: "I don't have time to get to your hotel. I'll see you at the airport."

Of course he wasn't at the airport. I was back in the boxing business.



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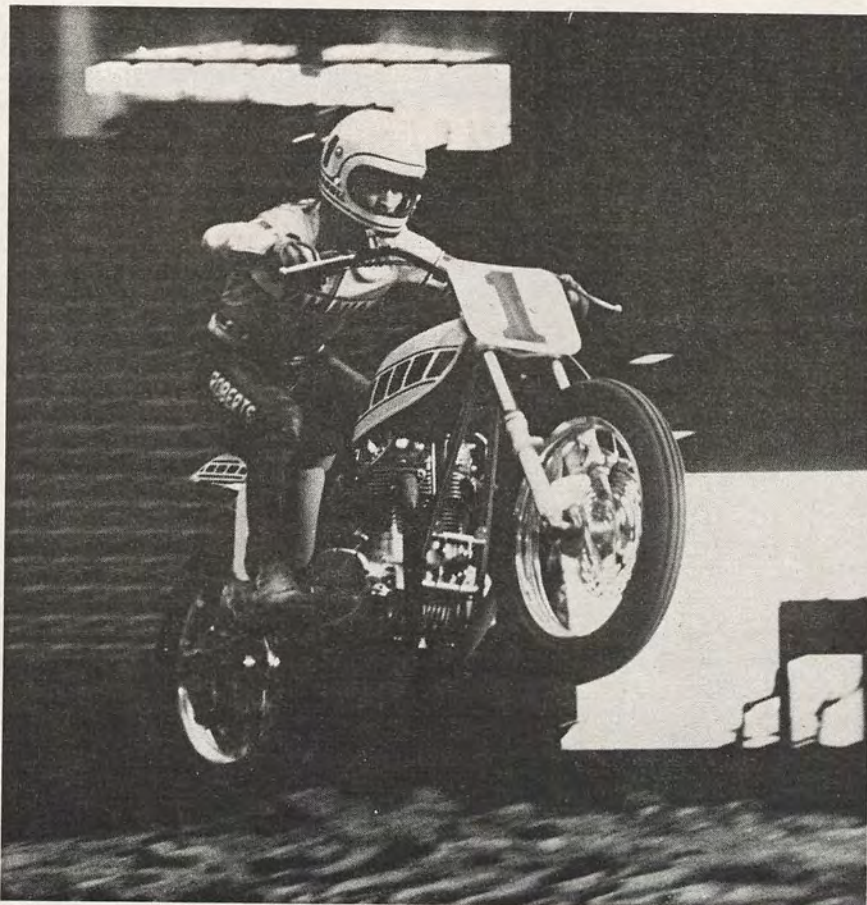
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SPORTING LIFE

Kenny Roberts is happy when he is sitting on a motorcycle, talking about motorcycles and eating with motorcycle racers. The rest of the time, he spends thinking — about motorcycles.

WITH KEN ROBERTS



They came into the most luxurious stadium anyone ever built, the Houston Astrodome, the eighth wonder of the world, and they covered the floor with a ton of dirt. Then a garage door opened and half a dozen motorcycles blew in for a test run and filled the biggest room in the world with strong-smelling fumes and deafening roars. In order to speak to anyone, you had to put your mouth next to their ear and scream. It was like being at a Led Zeppelin concert, only the noise was greater, and the odor in the air different. But the result was the same: The audience was high, grooving on fumes and thunder.

Then the six riders disappeared, and one more came out onto the track for a solo. The leathers that covered his upper body were gold and blended into the gold chassis of his Yamaha cycle. He rode his bike differently. The man and the machine blended as smoothly, as efficiently as their gold colors. Even at the uncommonly low speeds dictated by the small indoor track, this man obviously was the class of the field, the star. There was a certain aesthetic pleasure in watching Kenny Roberts glide over the steeplechase jump in the



Gene's Classic. Kenny's year.

The fourth Champion Spark Plug Motorcycle Classics at Ontario Motor Speedway was the first won by an American. Former Grand National Champion Gene Romero overpowered the top foreign riders to take the 200-mile National. Giving "Burrito" his first road racing victory ever. Second went to Gene's Yamaha teammate Kenny Roberts. The winner of six AMA Nationals in '74. Plus AMA's Grand National Championship for the second year straight.

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SPORTING LIFE CONTINUED

middle of the arena, a pleasure that dominated the Grand National Motorcycle championships at the Astrodome in Houston.

Roberts finished a few turns around the short track and pulled up by the mechanics and pit tootsies (the cyclists' term for groupies) watching the workout. One pit tootsie asked Roberts to sign her t-shirt and he blushed. He stood straddling his bike with his Bell helmet under his arm, wearing his ABC leathers with Yamaha lettered across the front. His bike was covered with advertisements for S&W shocks, Champion sparkplugs, Goodyear tires, AMA Manufacturing and the Rocky Cycle Company. Roberts' dominant features were not his straight blond hair, his chiseled features nor his well-conditioned frame; they were his sponsors.

All this advertising allowed Roberts, in a sport where no more than a dozen riders make a living, to earn \$180,000 last year. His chief rival, on the track and in earnings, is Gary Scott, the gifted star of the Harley-Davidson team. Scott earned under \$100,000 in 1974.

"I want to find out what makes you tick," someone asked Roberts in Houston.

"Money," he replied immediately.

Although he is only 23 years old, Roberts has been immersed in motorcycles for almost a decade. He started out by riding bicycles, but they were not fast enough. Then he tried horses, but they were not fast enough, either. When he was 14, his father, who had done some bike riding himself, made Roberts a minibike and the kid was hooked. In his backyard in Modesto, California, Kenny set up a course that ran up his neighbor's driveway, around a peach tree, between the two houses and down his own driveway. One day he came around the peach tree and didn't see his brother standing between the houses. He ran into him, sent him flying up into the air and down into a garbage can full of ashes. The ashes all flew up into the air. "It looked like



To publicize the motorcycle tour, Ken Roberts will dress up for a talk show. But he's more comfortable with bikes.

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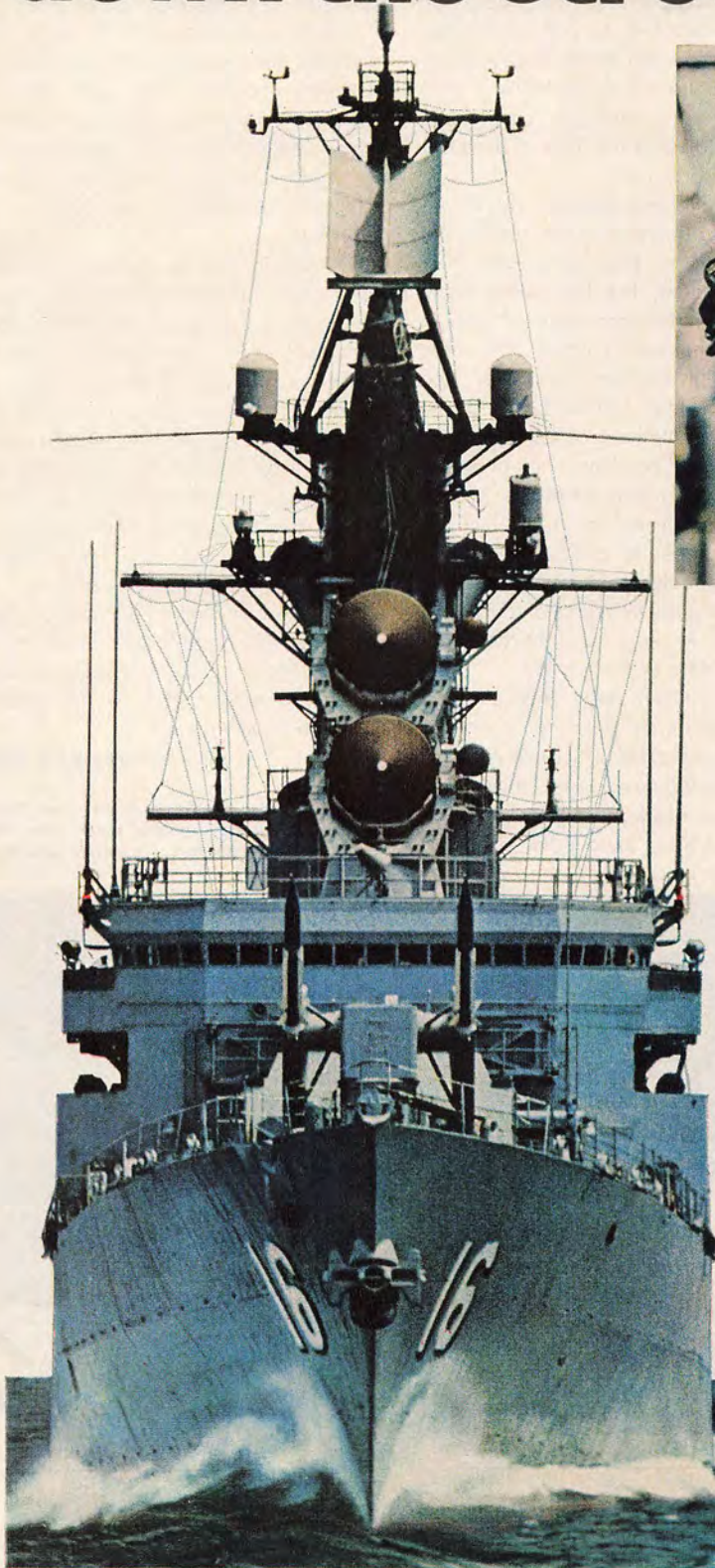
But it's not all work. Not with the great places you'll see, the good friends you'll make along the way.

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an H-bomb exploding," Kenny says. Both brothers survived the incident.

His parents were not earning more than \$10,000 a year between two jobs, but they still invested that much in six bikes while nursing Kenny through Sportsman competition until he was good enough to race with the professionals. In his first professional race, he mixed the oil and gasoline himself. But he used the wrong grade of Benzol. The flag waved and he got off the line ahead of everyone else. But around the second turn, his bike exploded.

He wasn't discouraged. "I thought motorcycle racers were big guys," says Roberts, who is only five-foot-six and 130 pounds. "But they were just a bunch of guys who put pants on like me. Do I look like your leather-jacket street meanie?"

He practiced in his backyard every night until ten or 11 o'clock. "It wasn't really practicing. There's nothing in the world that I would have rather been doing than riding my bike." He certainly wasn't going to let school interfere. He was thrown out of high school in the middle of his junior year for missing too many classes. "I left school to pursue my hobby," he says. "I had a sponsor then, so I had to. You can go to school any time. But you can't always find a sponsor."

"What do you do besides racing?"

he was asked.

"Racing," he answered.

His total commitment has left Roberts with a narrow view of life. He often drives from his Southern California home across the country to races and spends the entire 36 to 48 hours in his van thinking about nothing but racing. "I think about how I will race from different positions. I pick out where I'm going to pass. Every track is different so I think about the track. You're going so fast that if you don't have a plan laid out in your mind you can miss a turn and end up in the laps of the people in the front row."

At night, Roberts likes to eat dinner with racing people and talk about racing, then go to bed early and think about the races. His fanaticism is encouraged by the entourage of people he always has surrounding him—three mechanics, his mother and father who sell premium items from a booth at the races, representatives of all the companies whose products he endorses and the local public relations people in each town who count on him for promotion since he is the star of the circuit. (The only athlete who appears to have a bigger traveling entourage is Muhammad Ali. And he is the best recognized athlete in the world.)

Roberts' concentration has allowed him to escape major injury thus far in a sport that specializes in scares. A Houston radio announcer asked him if he was ever seriously injured and Roberts smirked and said, "Sure, I fell once and

stubbed my big toe. It hurt for about 15 minutes." He has, however, shot himself in the leg, and he managed to hot-rod a Fiat into a canal in Venice last year. "As the water filled up in the car," Roberts remembers, "I was just wondering what they would write about me in the papers."

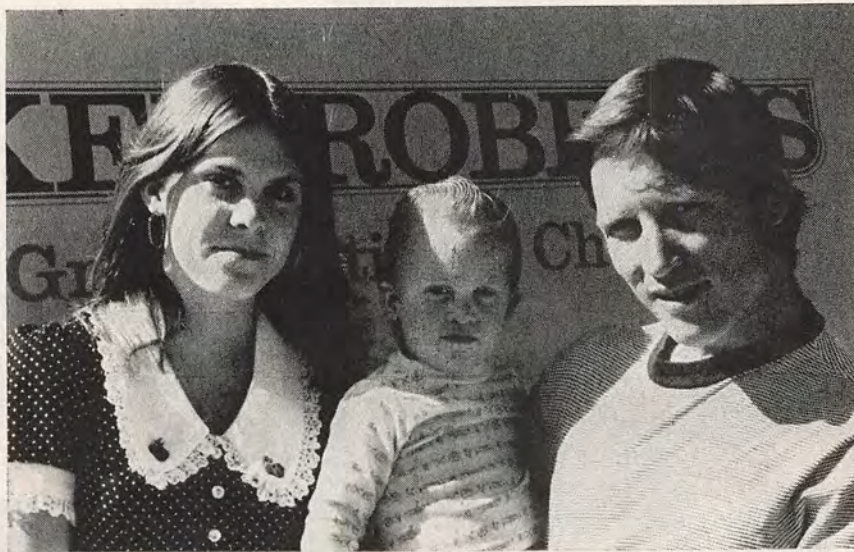
Roberts has tried hunting and fishing and golf, but they are all too slow for him. And watching football bores him to death. He occasionally likes movies, but insists he has never seen Marlon Brando on a motorcycle. The only thing Roberts collects is houses. He now owns five, all in California. He lives with his wife and two-year-old son in one, in Villa Park.

His whole life is centered around maintaining the number one that marks the front of his cycle, the number that signifies he was the Grand National champion last year as he was the year before. He wears the number on his favorite tie clasp. And he speaks about it constantly. It has allowed him to be the only motorcycle racer in the Goodyear Sports Club along with Mark Donohue, A.J. Foyt, Richard Petty, Jackie Stewart and other top car drivers.

The one non-racing occupation that strikes Roberts as truly wild is driving a cab in New York. "Those guys are crazy," he says. "They're the closest thing I know to racers."

—MARTY BELL

Harley-Davidson's Gary Scott may keep Roberts company on the track, but off-track, Roberts prefers his wife and son.





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AL BESSELINK

When Al Besselink got engaged to his planned third wife, she insisted that he have an old-fashioned talk with her Texas-oil-man father. The father asked Besselink what he did for a living, and Besselink told him that he was a pro golfer. "I don't know anything about golf," said the oil man. "Forget golf. I'm going to make you vice president of my firm and pay you \$25,000 a year."

"Twenty-five thousand!" repeated Besselink. "I tip more than that!"

Al Besselink was exaggerating—probably—but exaggeration is one of his best games. Besselink may have been golf's biggest spender in the 1950's—sort of an early version of John Jacobs (see page 98)—even though Bessy never earned more than \$14,000 in official money in any one year. Besselink was unquestionably a gifted golfer, but he was better known for big spending, little sleep and heavy gambling.

In 1953, Besselink qualified for the first Tournament of Champions in Las Vegas. He went out a week early, did all his partying, then decided to concentrate on winning the tournament. To

help his concentration, he spread around \$50,000 in side bets, bets he couldn't afford to lose. He couldn't afford to lose because he didn't have \$50,000.

Rested, and determined, Besselink led through most of the tournament. But when he came to the final hole on the final day, he needed to sink a long birdie putt to win. Besselink had prepared for the problem: "I'd said I'd give half my winnings to the Damon Runyon Cancer Fund. I knew the Man Upstairs would be on my side." Besselink sank the putt, gave half his \$10,000 purse to the Fund—and kept the side bets.

A bad back has kept the 51-year-old Besselink out of pro golf for the last few years, but he doesn't seem to mind. A bachelor again, he lives as he always has, dividing his time among swank country clubs, the race track and women.

Besselink, with his usual bravado, does not consider John Jacobs his successor on the pro tour. "Comparing him to me," he says, "is like comparing a hundred dollar bill to a one dollar bill. It's not even a contest."

—Sheryl Flatow

INSIDE FACTS

BY ALLAN ROTH

Defensive strength, particularly up the middle, is a must for a winning major-league team, and based on 1974 performances, Cincinnati and Baltimore start the 1975 season as the top clubs in defensive ability at the key positions (C-2B-SS-CF). . . . The Reds had four *Sporting News* Gold Glove winners last year (selected by the National League managers and coaches), and they all played key defensive positions, the first time in Gold Glove history (starting in 1957) that one team filled all four key spots.

Johnny Bench was picked the best defensive catcher in the NL for the seventh year in a row in 1974, Joe Morgan was the choice at 2B for the second successive season, Dave Concepcion won the

honors at shortstop for the first time, and Cincinnati centerfielder Cesar Geronimo was one of the three outfielders chosen on the NL All-Star defensive team (Cesar Cedeño and Bobby Bonds were the others, each winning for the third time).

The Orioles also had four Gold Glove winners in 1974, three of them in "key" positions, Bobby Grich (2B), Mark Belanger (SS) and Paul Blair (CF). . . . The fourth Oriole winner, of course, was Brooks Robinson, who was picked for the 15th year in a row. . . . It was the fourth time in the last six years that Baltimore had four players and three infielders on the All-Star defensive club. . . . Blair has been selected seven times (and six years in a row), Belanger four times, and Grich twice.

By winning Gold Glove honors for the second year in a row, Grich and Belanger became only the third pair of 2B-SS teammates to win in successive seasons, tying Nellie Fox-Luis Aparicio (White

Sox, 1959-60) and Bill Mazeroski-Gene Alley (Pirates, 1966-67). . . . The Orioles also had 2B-SS winners in 1969 and 1971 in Dave Johnson and Belanger. . . . The only other 2B-SS teammates to win were Bobby Knoop-Jim Fregosi (Angels, 1967) and Morgan-Concepcion in 1974.

The Phillies had no Gold Glove winners in 1974, but they certainly had unique defensive credentials, as all four infielders—Willie Montanez, Dave Cash, Larry Bowa and Mike Schmidt—finished in the runner-up spots in the Gold Glove voting, behind winners Steve Garvey, Morgan, Concepcion and Doug Rader (who won for the fifth year in a row).

Other consistent defensive All-Stars in recent years, in addition to those previously mentioned, include Jim Kaat, who has been picked as the best defensive pitcher in the AL in each of the last 13 seasons, and George Scott, who was voted best in the AL at 1B for the sixth time and the fourth year in a row in 1974.

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Chet Walker

1. Which player did the New York Nets give the Virginia Squires as part of the deal for Julius Erving?

- a. John Roche
- b. Cincy Powell
- c. George Carter

2. Which of these quarterbacks has not been traded back to the team he broke in with as a rookie?

- a. Norm Snead
- b. Bob Berry
- c. Fran Tarkenton

3. Match the players who were involved in trades for each other.

Flynn Robinson	Chet Walker
Jerry Lucas	Oscar Robertson
Jimmy Washington	Cazzie Russell

4. In 1952, how many players did the Los Angeles Rams trade to the Dallas Texans for Les Richter?



Oscar Robertson

- a. 10
- b. 11
- c. 12

5. Which slugger lasted the longest with the Dodgers before being traded?

- a. Frank Howard
- b. Frank Robinson
- c. Dick Allen

6. True or False: Although Rick Barry has played for several different teams in two leagues, he has never been traded for another player.

7. Which of these NHL players has been traded the most in his career?

- a. Eddie Shack
- b. Bryan Watson
- c. Arnie Brown

8. Which of these players was not part of the 1968 trade that brought Wilt Chamberlain to Los Angeles?

- a. Archie Clark
- b. Connie Dierking
- c. Jerry Chambers

9. To which team did the Los Angeles Rams trade nine players for Ollie Matson in 1959?

- a. Chicago Cardinals
- b. Cleveland Browns
- c. Detroit Lions

10. Which one of these Oakland A's was not acquired through a trade?

- a. Joe Rudi
- b. Bill North
- c. Dick Green

11. Which NBA player was the first

to play on three different teams in the current season?

- a. Neal Walk
- b. Rick Adelman
- c. Jim Chones

12. Which player did the New York Mets give the San Francisco Giants as part of the deal for Willie Mays?

- a. Bernie Williams
- b. Tommy Williams
- c. Charlie Williams

13. Who did the Cleveland Browns draft with the number one choice they received from Miami as compensation for Paul Warfield?

- a. Greg Pruitt
- b. Thom Darden
- c. Mike Phipps



Cazzie Russell

14. Match each quarterback with the players for whom he was once traded.

Bill Munson	Mike Lucci-Darrell Dess
Earl Morrall	Tom Flores-Art Powell
Daryle Lamonia	Milt Plum-Pat Studstill

15. Which goalie did the Los Angeles Kings trade to Montreal as part of the deal for Rogie Vachon?

- a. Denis DeJordy
- b. Gerry Desjardins
- c. Michel Dumas

16. Which player was traded to the New York Mets for a player to be named later and then became that player to be named later?

- a. Galen Cisco
- b. Larry Burright
- c. Harry Chiti

FOR ANSWERS TURN TO PAGE 103

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It's A Bird It's A Plane...

It's **RICK BARRY**

BY JERRY IZENBERG

New York's Madison Square Garden is the meanest slice of basketball real estate in the world. No visiting ballplayer who sets foot on its shiny court can escape the harsh judgments of the fiercely knowledgeable, fiercely partisan crowd. And anyone who is not a Knick is a visitor, a stranger, an enemy, even if his roots happen to be in New York.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was a high-school hero in Manhattan, but as a pro from Milwaukee, he is a total villain. Billy Cunningham was beautiful as a teenager in Brooklyn,

but now he's just another Philadelphia invader, a target to be needled and derided.

Rick Barry grew up in nearby New Jersey. Like Kareem and Cunningham, Barry went away to college. Now, after ten years as a pro, on five different teams, Barry plays for a team that calls itself Golden State, a team that won't even admit it's from Oakland.

One night early this season, Rick Barry came into Madison Square Garden, wearing "Golden State" across his chest, which is about as far from Manhattan as you can get

in the NBA, and faced that hungry New York crowd, hungry for victories, hungry for villains, a crowd that had fed on Barry many times before. They had called him gunner, for shooting too much; they had called him Joe Greed, for earning too much; they had called him much, much worse. But, suddenly, in this one night, Barry turned the crowd around. He won the people to his side, and it wasn't only because he is one of basketball's few remaining white superstars. He won the crowd because he's Superman.

Barry started flying right at the



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It's A Bird

CONTINUED

start. Nine seconds after Cliff Ray outreached Tom Riker for the opening tap, Barry arched home a sweeping hook shot for the game's first two points. Nineteen seconds later he scored a jumper from the corner for its next two. Before the first half was over, he had hit on 12 of 17 shots and had made both free throws he attempted. New York has become a team totally dependent on its backcourt, and at halftime that backcourt of Walt Frazier and Earl Monroe had 28 points. And Rick Barry—all by himself—had 26.

But the statistics were only the trimmings. The beauty of Barry was the bay-blue uniform with gold piping leaving the field behind on a fast break, soaring high above all defenders to unleash a classic jump shot, threading between bodies, forcing a lane where none exists, shoveling in a two-handed underhand layup. There were nine other players on the court at all times. But no one noticed them.

The cheers were grudging at first, tinged with despair for the home team. But by the fourth quarter the cheers were pure respect, even awe. With just 5:17 to play, Barry bent low, a coiled spring of a man, scooped a loose ball from between Harthorne Wingo's feet, exploded three strides ahead of the field, sprang high above the rim and stuffed the ball. Barry had scored 44 points and added four assists. He had destroyed any lingering doubts about his astonishing skills.

"On every play, no matter who scores," said Harthorne Wingo, "he handles the ball at least one time. He makes them happen."

"What's the big deal?" said Al Attles, Barry's coach. "I've seen him do it every night."

Attles is spoiled. He has seen Barry all this season—a season in which Barry has led a team shorn

of other stars, studded with rookies and upgraded reserves, to the top of its division. Why now? Why has Rick Barry suddenly become, in the eloquent words of Sam Skinner, an Oakland broadcaster, "the unkept promise redeemed?"

The day of the NBA All-Star game in Phoenix, Ray Scott sat in the hotel coffee shop and spoke about Barry. Scott is a huge man whom nobody is ever going to mistake for a second baseman with the Cleveland Indians. Once he could trade elbows with the sharpest elbows in the NBA. Now he coaches the Detroit Pistons. In cool, analytical terms, he explained the evolution of Rick Barry as seen by a man whose job depends on his ability to understand the superstar psyche.

"It isn't hard, it's simple," said Scott. "Basketball is a game of ego. Subtract four egos from five and what you have left is a man who knows where he is going. Before he had too many egos to think about. Now they have to think about him and he is player enough and man enough to make them see it is worth the time. Nate is gone and Cazzie is gone and Clyde is gone and I guess you could add Jim is gone too."

Scott was talking about the major surgery which changed the Golden State Warriors from too many shining stars into one bright light. The names of the former Warriors are Nate Thurmond, Cazzie Russell, Clyde Lee and Jim Barnett. In his way, the way of a professional, Ray Scott was simply pointing out that the housecleaning, either by accident or design, had propelled Barry into a role he could not play with this team in the past.

"He is the captain," said Scott. "They tell me it means a lot to him and I believe it, because he plays like it does. Right now he is playing as well as anyone has ever played this game. It isn't easy coming where he's coming from . . . all the talk . . . all the word-of-mouth reputations. I don't think it was easy for Alvin either but they seem

to have got it together."

Al Attles, who for years played and coached teams that always looked up to find the L.A. Lakers, instigated the changes that moved his team ahead of everyone in the division. "Look," says Attles, "for four years, we lost to L.A. and you can blame that on whatever you want, but that was just as high as this team could go. So we changed. And part of the change came after we sorted the faces out and Rick Barry became the captain. Captain, well, that's never been a big deal. I mean what does the captain do? Shake hands at the centerline before the game starts? But Rick brought a new dimension to it. He was supposed to be the egotistical money-grabber. He couldn't play defense. You don't think steals are a part of defense? You watch him. You want to know where Rick Barry is coming from? Well, you just look at where I came from . . . a little school . . . nobody cared what happened when I broke in. Why should they? But he was the big draft choice from the glamour school and if you don't think that's pressure, well, you just don't know. But right now I'm telling you he could be the best who ever played. He brings something new each night."

The trades and Barry's assuming the role of captain are surface reasons for the redemption. But there are deeper things too. Setting is one. After trying the glamour towns like Miami and New York, Rick Barry has finally found comfort in the unlikely setting of Oakland.

He tried Miami for college. The University of Miami where Bruce Hale was the coach and where Bruce Hale's daughter, Pam, became Barry's wife. Deep down, a listener suspects that Miami was not much to him beyond that. "It was synthetic," he says.

There he scored more points than anyone else in college was scoring at the time. But he also began to acquire the reputation that was to plague him later. In his senior year, there was a game against Loyola, a nothing game against a

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It's A Bird

CONTINUED

mediocre team. A kid named Erb gave him the kind of pants-grabbing, elbow-digging type of affection which invariably is the burden of a shooter. On a jump ball, Barry threw one punch and broke Erb's jaw and loosened four teeth.

The pros' scouting reports were in *sotto voce*—a gunner, a temper, a problem kid, a flake. But still they could not pass up the shooting eye.

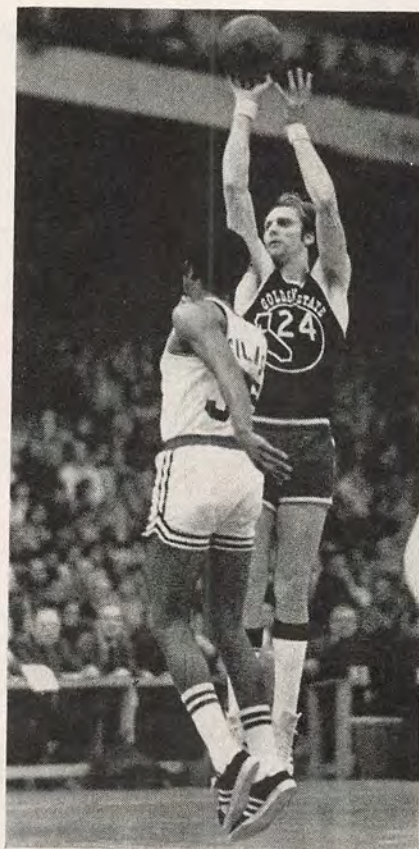
The feeling still persists that at that time he wanted more than anything for the Knicks to draft him. After all, he was shaped by the playgrounds and grammar school gyms of Elizabeth, New Jersey. He had gone on to stardom of sorts nearby in Roselle Park. Across the river were the Knicks, and his father, his first coach, had once played ball with Eddie Donovan, then the Knicks' general manager.

The Knicks did not draft him. The Warriors did and no matter what you have been led to believe, the money was hardly staggering: three grand to sign and \$15,000 for the first year. And now, what seems light years later, he still feels bitter. "I was hot at Ned Irish (then president of the Knicks). I remember reading he had said I was skinny and flakey. And then Earl Lloyd of Detroit had said I wasn't mean enough to play in the NBA."

In his rookie year, skinny, flakey, gentle Rick Barry averaged 25.7 points a game—ten less than he averaged the following year.

What followed soon after was the vagabond life, a treadmill between cities and leagues: San Francisco (NBA) to Oakland (ABA) to Washington (ABA) to New York (ABA), and all accompanied by half-truths and no-truths and a har-

Rick Barry began his odyssey with the San Francisco Warriors, jumped to the Oakland Oaks, moved with them to Washington, was sold to the New York Nets, and was sent by a judge to Oakland to play for the Golden State Warriors.



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It's A Bird

CONTINUED

vesting of reputations that are kept alive by scouts with old wives tales and too much newsprint inspired by too many managements.

In 1971, he ended up in suburban New York with the Nets. He seemed happy and secure. And they loved his shooting in New York, although he was ABA and the guys downtown at the Garden were playing a different game. Jim Bouton, working as a local sportscaster, was once prompted to report, "The Nets were idle tonight. Rick Barry scored 35 points."

After two seasons with the Nets, a California judge ruled that a contract he had signed with the Warriors when he was unhappy in Washington, had to be honored. So he went back to California. It was a move he never would have made if the judge hadn't forced him. But now he thinks it was the best move.

"New York," Barry says pensively. "I like it. I liked the banquets and I like to talk. But New York is still facades and imagery. Clyde and Joe Willie. That's New York. I guess I really wanted to get back to California. I mean it's more relaxed and I guess more me. I like the lifestyle and its a better place to raise my five kids."

He went back filled with new realizations.

"It took me ten years to learn that you can't win an argument with a referee."

And: "The crybaby bit? Well, you drive to the basket ten times in this game and seven of those times there will be contact and two of those seven you might get a whistle. Now when those things happen I know I was hit. And so, yes, I was hot headed."

And: "You learn pacing, but somehow the smarter you get the older your body becomes. Can you imagine if you could pull it all together when you are young? But you can't. I guess that's the law of

compensation."

He came back with his blond hair longer. And with his body heavier. And with the Hollywood looks matured. But he had that same intense look in his eyes. "He used to be so intense he made everyone on the floor nervous," Ray Scott said. "Hell, it looked like he made himself nervous too."

And Oakland embraced him like he had never gone away. Franklin Mieuli, the owner of the Warriors was obsessed with getting Barry back. Barry was his hero. Even when Barry played in the ABA, Mieuli kept his Warriors jersey framed and hanging on his living room wall. There was talk that Mieuli would move his team, but he knew if he could get Barry back he would make it in Oakland.

For years the town lay across the bay from San Francisco like a dull lump. From its inception, Oakland, Calif., had been a kind of dumping ground for the unwanted and all-too-wanted runaways from the Barbary Coast. Later, San Francisco would stretch and grow and through reputation become a magic city for people who had never even seen it.

But not Oakland. It was a mean hard bedroom across the bay. San Francisco had the ball clubs and the theaters and the music and the restaurants and the jobs. Oakland? Well, for one slice of Oakland there would be a list of past heroes which began and ended with the fact that Jack London once lived there. For another, there would be the birth of the Black Panthers. Small wonder that Gertrude Stein once wrote:

"Oakland. There is no there, there."

It was city in search of an identity and half believing it would never find one. The ragamuffin AFL Raiders picked up Al Davis, a new stadium, one league title and an uncommon share of near-misses. The new stadium-arena complex challenged the horizon for more help. What it got was pro hockey (which may move), a world championship baseball team which can never be called anything but transient as long as Charles Finley has the right

to move it and a basketball team whose greatest moments were previously measured in spectacular defeats.

And across the Bay, Mays was gone and Cepeda was gone and Marichal was gone and the 49ers have never won the big one.

So Rick Barry came back to a highly receptive constituency which is now responding at an average of 10,000 fans a night. And Mieuli was right. Now he doesn't have to move his team.

The controversy and criticism are behind Barry now. But he still finds it necessary to explain.

"I left the Warriors to go to the Oaks (Oakland's defunct ABA team) only because Bruce (Hale) was there. It was never the money. I got \$75,000 but I could have negotiated and gotten that from the Warriors. I told Franklin (Mieuli, who owns the club) I was going. I even sat out my year. I wasn't trying to negotiate. I knew the ABA was trying to get Nate (Thurmond) too and I told Franklin what to do to keep him. I had a promise that if the Oaks moved, I wouldn't have to go but they moved and they held me to the contract. I went to Washington and Virginia and finally New York. But I never broke a contract. I listen to the Catfish Hunter thing and people say he's only getting fair market value, but every time I moved I was supposed to be some greedy back-stabber."

"The money wasn't it. I never even had an agent."

But he doesn't have to explain anything. He just has to go out and play his game and no one who sees him will ask questions about the past. The only questions are what can Superman do in the future. "You know what I want now? What I dream about now? It's playing the perfect game . . . shutting my man off with nothing . . . not missing a single shot or a single free throw . . . not making a single turnover . . . the perfect game."

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For Bill Sharman, it was the perfect marriage—his association with the Los Angeles Lakers. He became the Lakers' head coach in 1971, and in that first season together, the Lakers and Sharman assembled a record 33-game winning streak, a record 69-victory season and the only NBA championship in the history of the franchise. The Forum rang with the cheers of a capacity crowd almost every night.

The cheers are mainly memories now. There are empty seats almost every night, and boos occasionally rise from the seats that are filled. Elgin Baylor, Jerry West and Wilt Chamberlain, the men who anchored the Lakers, have retired. The team, for the first time since Sharman became coach, will not win its division. For the first time in almost a decade, the Lakers may wind up below .500.

Bill Sharman sits on the bench, frustrated by the boos, frustrated by a group of players who do not come close to measuring up to the past. Sharman bears a professional burden and a personal burden, too.

For most of his life, Bill Sharman has looked younger than his age. But now, at 48, he does not look so young. His close-cropped hair is graying. His sun-tanned face is seamed. His blue eyes have lost some of their sparkle. Eventually, he leaves the arena, after ex-



plaining in his thin voice one more defeat. But, instead of heading for his \$150,000 home in plush Palos Verdes, he drives to his rented apartment in nearby Marina del Rey. He rented the apartment last September—one month after his wife Dorothy died of cancer.

"I couldn't part with our house," he says, leaning against the terrace railing, watching small boats bob like driftwood in the bay, "but I couldn't live there right now, either. I don't want to dwell on the past, I know life is for the living. But I've had a stomach ache for a long time now. I got it the day I found out how sick Dorothy was. I don't know if it will ever go away completely."

Ironically, the first seeds of Bill Sharman's personal troubles were sown during the harvest of his greatest professional triumph. About six weeks before the end of the 1971-72 season, while the Lakers were winning the NBA championship, Bill Sharman began losing his voice. Team doctors Robert Kerlan and Frank Jobe were unable to diagnose the cause. Neither could a series of throat specialists. Until Dr. Paul Ward of UCLA discovered an ulcer buried at the base of Bill's vocal chords, Sharman feared he had cancer.

The only cure was a complete vocal rest, impossible in the heat of a championship season. Instead,

Bill Sharman's Longest Season

BY BILL LIBBY

Sharman's voice turned into a harsh croak, painful for him and for his listeners. Finally, after the playoffs, Sharman and his wife took a vacation in Hawaii, then came home to spend the summer—quietly. For the first six weeks, Bill communicated by handwritten notes, which Dorothy usually had to translate. She answered his telephone, she passed on messages. She was his link to the world.

"I think I only spoke twice during that whole time," Sharman recalls. "Once, Dorothy woke me up to tell me I was talking in my sleep. Another time, I woke up imagining I heard noises, and without thinking, hollered in hopes of scaring off any intruders. It was a strain on both of us, but at least we didn't have any arguments." Sharman smiles. "In fact, when I started to speak in the new way, my voice sounded sort of sexy, and I told Dorothy she was getting a new and exciting husband.

"Going through this," he adds, softly, "we came close to one another."

Gradually, over the next few seasons, thanks to rest and proper speaking methods, the ulcer shrank, the pain diminished. But each time a new season began, Sharman would slip back, under the strains of coaching, on his voice and on his psyche. By the start of the present season, Sharman's voice was almost back to normal. But by then, his life was torn apart.

Sharman has had a full, rich life, spiced by stardom in two sports, by team championships and individual honors. But it has not been a perfect life, an idyllic life. Almost 30 years ago, Bill Sharman's only brother died in a car crash. Sharman's first marriage, which began as his professional athletic career blossomed, lasted more than 20 years and produced four children, then collapsed in 1968. His two sons and two daughters went to live with his ex-wife, Illeana, in Santa Barbara; two are now married, and Sharman is a grandfather.

In 1969, Sharman married for the second time. He was then 42, his new wife, Dorothy, was 35 (and she



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Longest Season

CONTINUED

had a ten-year-old daughter, Jennifer, by a previous marriage). Dorothy was a former schoolteacher, a stunningly attractive blonde, as athletic as Sharman himself. They bought a house on a golf course, next to a tennis club, and often they played tennis and golf together. "He finally found someone who wanted to live his sort of life," said a friend, "someone he could be comfortable with."

It was while playing tennis, in the summer of 1972, that Dorothy first felt the pain in her back. Bill took her to doctors and chiropractors, but back problems are notoriously difficult to diagnose. When X-rays revealed an old injury that might be acting up, she was given stretching exercises, then put in traction for a couple of weeks. It was not until 1973, when she noticed a hardness in the tissue of her back, on the right side, that exploratory surgery was prescribed.

"Up until that time, we thought it was a minor thing, but then we knew it was something else," Sharman says. "In November, Dr. Jobe went in and came out with the bad news that it was a kind of cancer which had begun in the bone marrow of her spine and was spreading across her back and her hip. Dr. Kerlan told me, 'Bill, I hate to scare you, but the long-term prognosis is not good.'"

"Long-term" meant, at best, three or four years.

Dorothy was sent to Sloan-Kettering Institute in New York City. Jack Kent Cooke, the Lakers' owner, "was marvelous," says Sharman. "He told me, 'Don't ask me, just do whatever you feel is right for you. Take the season off if you want.' I wanted to; I wanted to be with her and I didn't want to disrupt the team by constantly com-

ing and going." In the end, though, Sharman did stay with his team. "I didn't take the season off, because she didn't want me to, and because I didn't want it to look to her as if there was no hope and I was with her waiting for her to die. We did have hope at the time."

Surgeons operated in January, 1974, to cut out as much of the cancer as they could, and again in February. At one point, they considered amputating her right leg and hip, but decided not to. When Bill visited, he and Dorothy would play cards and watch TV together, trying to forget what was happening to them, and that they were alone, far from their family and their friends. Jack Kent Cooke—in New York to save his troubled Tele-Prompter Corporation—called Dorothy every day. He visited her at the hospital once, but did not return. Seeing her there, wasting away, might have been—literally—too much for him (Cooke suffered a heart attack two years ago).

Bill says, "When they went into her for the fourth time, it looked like they might have caught the cancer in time and our spirits soared. She wanted to return home and so I took her home in March in a wheelchair. After a while, she could get around on crutches a little. She seemed to be recovering, but I suppose the disease was just in a temporary remission. After she'd been home about two months, we felt the hardness higher up in her back and we knew the cancer was spreading and we knew without saying it that she was dying. Dr. Jobe took her into the hospital here in Los Angeles and operated again to cut out what he could. She was seldom off her back or out of bed after that."

All this time, Dorothy insisted the gravity of her condition be kept secret; she did not want to be pitied. Bill says, "Jennifer was thirteen when her mother was stricken. We never told her it was cancer in so many words, but after a while I knew she knew. She never asked about it. Maybe she didn't

want to hear it. But she was brave about it. Near the end, she went to stay with her father, who also had remarried and had children of his own in San Diego. I had come to be close to her, but we knew she would have to live with her father when Dorothy died. *If Dorothy died. . .*"

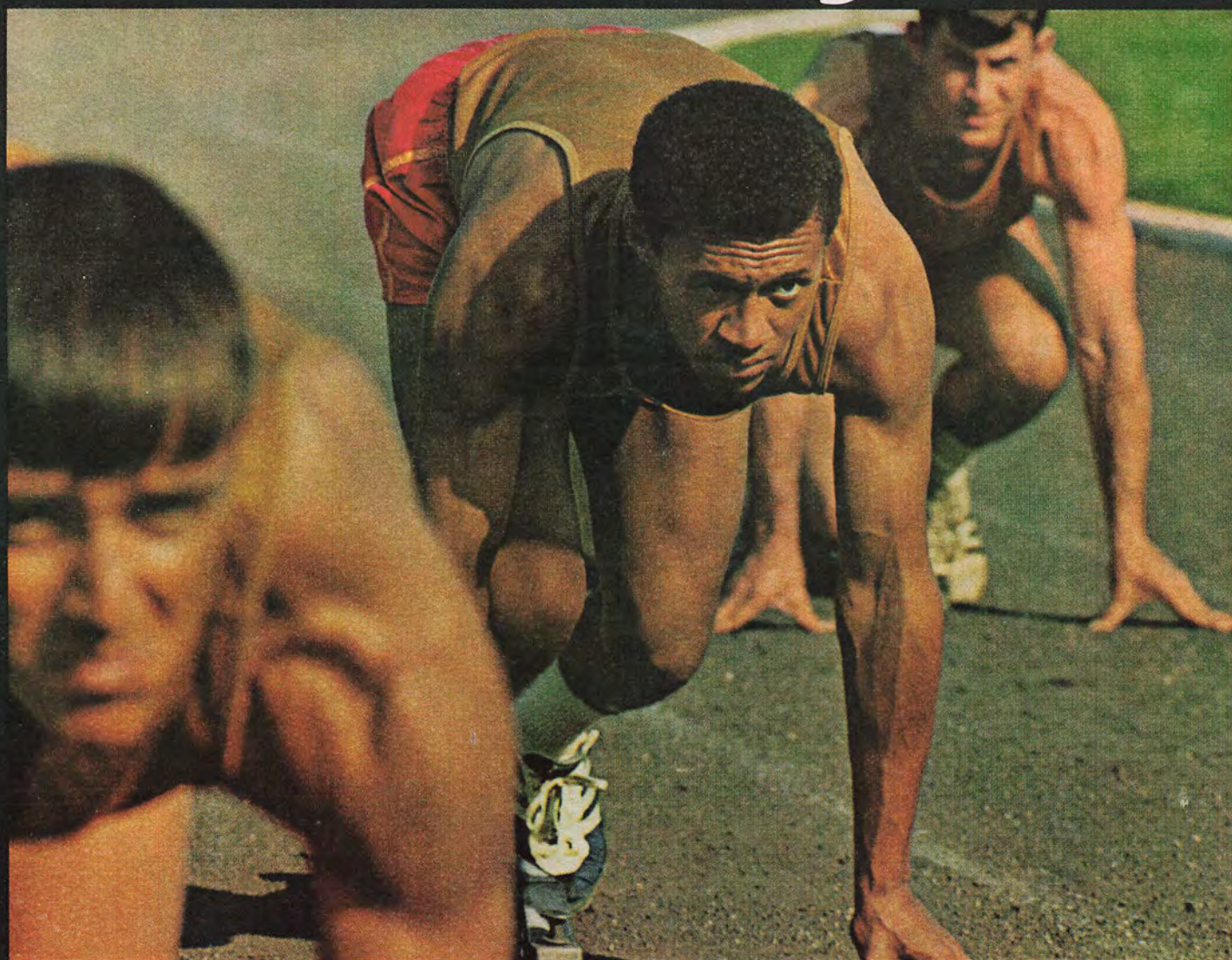
Dorothy had made herself many friends among the Lakers, among their wives, among the writers who covered the club. As the truth of her terminal condition gradually slipped out, a deepening depression set in around the Forum, the home of the Lakers. The basketball wives had a tree planted outside her window, where she could view it from her bed. At first, many of her friends came to visit, but as she worsened, she dreaded having to receive visitors who could see her growing paler and thinner and weaker every day.

"Everyone did everything they could," says Sharman, "but, in the end, there wasn't anything anyone could do. The worst thing about an illness like this is the mental part. The physical pain from the cancer and the cutting could be kept down with shots and pills, but there is nothing short of putting you under to stop you from thinking about the life that is slipping away from you. We were a husband and wife who could always talk to each other, and after a time, we had to talk about this. At first, we could kid about it. But I'd tie myself into knots, trying to be cheerful, and she'd see it and then try to cheer me up."

He pauses for a moment, then adds, "Eventually, though, we had to face the reality of a life without her. Dorothy was able to talk about it without tears. She talked about wanting me to make a new life for myself, but mostly she talked about what she wanted for Jennifer. I seldom saw her cry and only twice did I see her break down: Once was when we were talking about how much we had together and once when she thought of not getting to see her daughter grow up. These times just tore the guts out of me."

"The last six weeks or so, last

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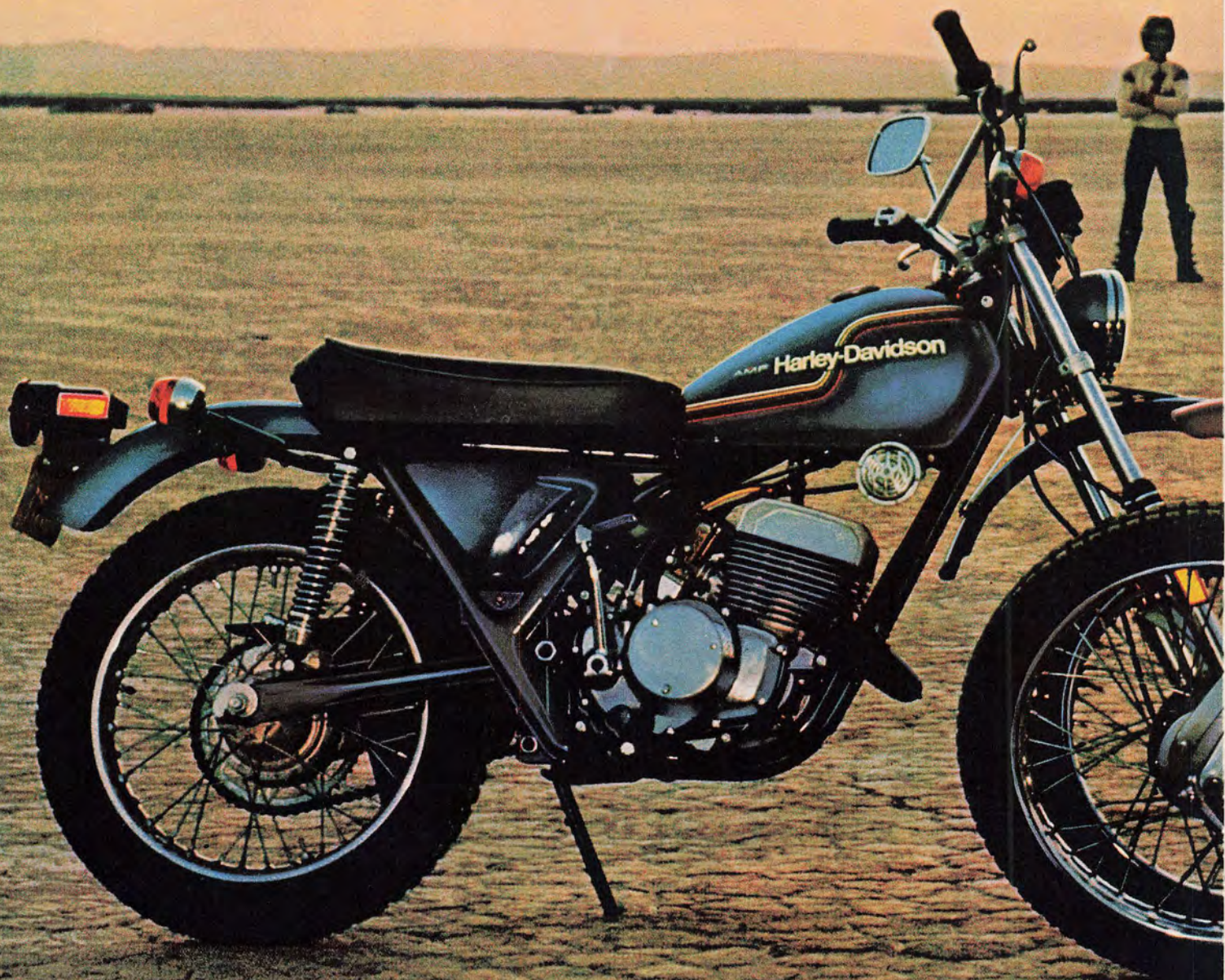
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Longest Season

CONTINUED

summer, the doctors told me her time was running out. I didn't tell her, but by then she was not aware of much. She was weak and sedated and slept most of the time. A private nurse was with her around the clock. I'd stand by her bed every morning before I left the house and every evening after I returned and if she opened her eyes, I'd speak to her. But she seldom answered. I seldom knew if she understood me or not. I was waiting for it to end, so her suffering would stop.

"The last morning, the ninth of September, she opened her eyes and I spoke to her, but she didn't speak to me. I told her I loved her and I left." He grows silent for a moment, his eyes watering. That day he'd had to go to the Internal Revenue Department to clear up a minor matter. A few hours later he returned, and a nurse met him at the door with tears in her eyes. "I am sorry," she said. "Mrs. Sharman died about an hour ago."

Bill went into the bedroom. He sat by Dorothy's side for a while.

Pre-season basketball practices were about to begin, and Sharman admits that they were, in a sense, his salvation; if anything could fill the void, it was basketball, since for Bill, basketball is both a profession and an obsession. At the University of Southern California, he was outstanding in both basketball and baseball. (Later, he played outfield in the Brooklyn Dodgers farm system and briefly in the majors.) He broke into pro basketball with the old Washington Caps, then went to Boston and became an All-Star with the Celtics. But even

For three years, when Bill Sharman rasped advice to the Lakers, they responded with victories; the victories are rare now.



Longest Season

CONTINUED

while he was still a player, Sharman was planning a career as a pro coach. A superb outside shooter(he still holds the league record for accuracy from the freethrow line), years ago he wrote an outstanding instructional book, *Sharman On Shooting*, and will be following it up this year with a new book, done with UCLA's John Wooden, entitled, *The Wooden-Sharman Methods*, to be published by Macmillan. Even in the offseason, he can't stop coaching—imparting his basketball wisdom to little Wilts and Wests at his summer basketball camp.

Given his first chance to coach when Abe Saperstein's American Basketball League was born in 1961, Bill retired as a player to take over the L.A. Jets. The Jets folded at mid-season; Bill became coach of the Cleveland Pipers, guiding them from the league's cellar to the league title. But the next season, the entire ABL folded, so Bill spent two years coaching at Cal State, Los Angeles, then two years as a basketball broadcaster, before Franklin Mieuli hired him to coach the floundering San Francisco Warriors. In his first season, Bill guided the Warriors to within a couple of baskets of beating Wilt Chamberlain's Philadelphia team in the playoff finals.

From the beginning, Sharman drilled his team in practices that tested their endurance, even on the day of a game. He used films like a football coach. He made his players sit through meeting after meeting. A perfectionist, he was not popular with his players—and the player who liked him least of all was the player owner Franklin Mieuli loved best of all: His youthful superstar, Rick Barry. The following season, Barry jumped to the new American Basketball As-

sociation. Although Sharman again led the Warriors into the playoffs, Mieuli couldn't forgive him for driving his prodigal son into exile.

"I wanted a 24-hour-a-day coach," Mieuli said, "but I got more than I bargained for."

When Mieuli refused to pay Sharman what he felt he deserved, Bill jumped to the ABA, too—as coach of the Los Angeles Stars.

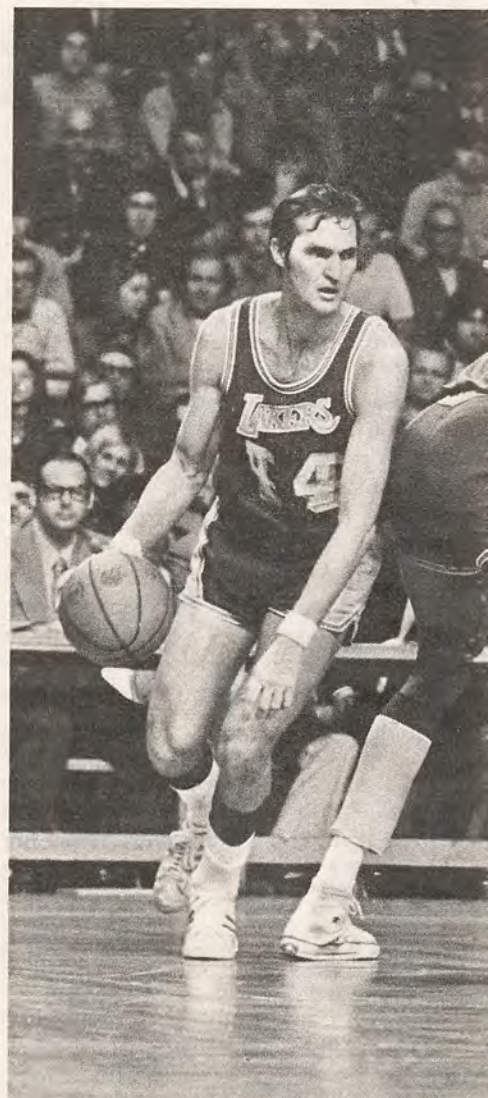
In San Francisco, in one year, he'd built a winner around the nucleus of Nate Thurmond and Rick Barry. In Los Angeles, it took him two years to build a winner, without any stars at all. That second year as head coach, after the team moved to Utah, he guided the Stars to the ABA championship. Then, hearing Jack Kent Cooke wanted a new coach for his Lakers, Sharman applied for the job and got it. He walked into a stress situation, where an aging assortment of superstars (some with super-egos) had lost seven playoff finals in 11 seasons, most of them to Sharman's old Celtics. In the eyes of the owner, the press and the public, anything short of an NBA championship would mean that Sharman had failed.

Although his stars—Elgin Baylor, Wilt Chamberlain and Jerry West—were 37, 35 and 33 years of age, respectively, and soloists, Sharman was set on turning them into a fast-break ballclub that emphasized teamwork. "That's the basketball I learned from Red Auerbach," he says, "and it's what I teach. You have to hustle every minute of every game and you have to sacrifice yourself unselfishly for the team."

He still denies it, but the Barry incident seemed to have softened his approach. This time, he devoted as much energy to soothing his players egos as he did to conditioning their muscles.

"I met with West first," he recalls. "I played golf with him. He

When his wife, Dorothy, was alive and healthy, and when Wilt Chamberlain was setting picks for Jerry West, Bill Sharman's life was fun—and coaching was a pleasure. Now Sharman buries himself in his job—to escape his memories.





beat me at golf, but I came out ahead: He gave me the real low-down on my new players. And he was the sort of star who could be coached. He agreed to play his position any way I wanted.

"Wilt was away until shortly before the season started. I invited him to lunch, then forgot to take my wallet. He laughed it off. He is independent, but intelligent and he was hungry for a championship.

He felt he could be the trigger-man in a fast-break brand of ball. I told him I believed in a game-day routine of togetherness, which included an early awakening, a morning practice, and an afternoon meeting. He told me he'd try it, although he's an insomniac who sleeps mornings instead of nights.

"I told him I wanted him to turn out for practices even if he didn't need them, and he said he would,



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Longest Season

CONTINUED

just so no one would have an excuse for stirring up trouble. And he did not miss a single practice all season. He grumbled a bit, but we did not have a serious disagreement.

"I tried to get along with Baylor several times," Sharman adds, "but it just never worked out. When the season started, I was disappointed to discover he no longer was the super-player I'd remembered. His knees were weak and he had an ankle injury. We had a young forward, Jim McMillian, who fit our running game better. I had to tell Elgin I wanted to bring him in off the bench, while starting the younger player. It was the hardest thing I've had to do in coaching. It hurt Elgin, but he understood. He did say he wanted to go out on top and asked for a few days to think about it. I didn't press the point. In a few days, he announced his retirement.

"Our record 33-game winning streak started the night McMillian replaced Elgin in the lineup."

Although his old Celtic teammates were the best team he ever saw over a *series* of seasons, Sharman says his Laker club was the best ever over *one* season. "We had beautiful balance in McMillian and Happy Hairston up front, Wilt at center and West and Gail Goodrich at the guards. We had a reliable bench. Every player complemented every other player, and if we'd had Baylor at his peak—when he was the best forward alive—our club would have been incomparable. Wilt was no longer at his peak and certain players could defend him, but he was still the most powerful player the game has had and he was still able to dominate games defensively, intimidating others out of their offensive patterns and re-

bounding and making the quick outlet pass to get our offense moving. Hairston helped Wilt with the rebounding.

"McMillian and Goodrich gave us good outside shooting. West handled the ball and quarterbacked the club on defense as well as offense. He must have set a record for steals. He not only was a great clutch shooter, but the greatest of defensive guards. He and Oscar Robertson have been the best guards basketball has had and Jerry has to have been the best at both ends of the court. I coached in the dressing room and from the bench, but Jerry coached on the court."

The Lakers finished with 69 victories in 82 games (one victory more than the old record established by Wilt's former Philadelphia team), then went on to win 12 out of 14 games to capture the NBA championship. Sharman became the first coach ever to win championships in three major basketball leagues: The ABL, ABA and NBA.

The following season, Chamberlain missed the pre-season practices, Hairston missed most of the regular season, and West was slowed by injuries in the playoffs. Still, the club won 60 games during the season, its second highest total ever, retained its divisional title, and reached the playoff finals before bowing. The Lakers really should have had a second straight championship—they were the stronger club—but the New York Knicks were inspired. Willis Reed didn't know it, but he was really ending his career, and the Knick captain ended it on a high note for him—Most Valuable Player of the championship series—a low note for Bill Sharman.

Last season, 1973-74, Wilt jumped to the ABA and West missed almost all of the season with an injury. To compound the Lakers' problems, in the first of a series of debilitating trades, Jim McMillian was traded to Buffalo for a center to replace Wilt. And Elmore Smith turned out to be not only shorter than Wilt but less

talented than the Lakers had hoped. The Lakers limped to 47 victories, but still won their division title, before being eliminated in the playoff opener. Then, before the 1974-75 season started, Jerry West retired, leaving Happy Hairston and Gail Goodrich as the only two regulars held over from the 1971-72 championship team. To get a ballhandling replacement for West, the Lakers traded guard Jim Price to Milwaukee, for Lucius Allen—and blushed when Price was named an All-Star by the NBA coaches. Meanwhile, the aging Connie Hawkins and Bill Bridges and Zelmo Beaty have long passed their prime.

"Right now," says Sharman, "I'm faced with my greatest challenge ever as a coach."

And as a man, too. At 48, life has already asked more of him than most men. He leaves the Forum after a game and goes home alone. He stands by the railing, above the boats bobbing up and down in the bay, and he holds his silence a while, staring out into the darkness, thinking his own private thoughts.

"I'm existing," he says. "I have to learn to live all over again. If I can, maybe the hurt in my gut will go away. I can't forget the past," he adds, "I don't even want to. But I do want to go on. I've even begun to date again. I hope people won't misunderstand, but I felt I should. I'm mourning, but I'm moving on, too."

Then he sighs, and says, "I can lose myself coaching, I can get lost in the games. But then, every once in a while, something reminds me of my wife and our life together and the hurt is sort of heavy and I feel like crying, but I don't."

"Like the other night, during a game, a pretty girl came by behind the bench. I caught a glimpse of her as she was walking away. For an instant, I thought it was Dorothy. . . .

"It was awful when I realized it wasn't Dorothy—and I was alone, on the bench, alone with my players."

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PHIL CHENIER Is No Longer A Hardship Case

BY JACKIE LAPIN

The men who own teams in the National Basketball Association are nothing if not benevolent, and when they initiated a *hardship* draft in 1971, it was the ultimate charitable gesture. Out of the goodness of their hearts, the NBA owners wanted to give a few underprivileged underclassmen the chance to pick up a million or so dollars. The fact that the ABA had recently plucked the best sophomore and junior basketball players off college campuses—Spencer Haywood in 1969, Ralph Simpson in 1970, George McGinnis and Julius Erving in 1971—had nothing to do, of course, with the NBA's decision to turn philanthropic.

Under the paternal system set up by the NBA in 1971, any needy underclassman could appeal for help and, after careful investigation of his resources by the league's security people, become eligible to be drafted as a hardship case. Since basketball is the ghetto game, almost anyone who has been any good at the game in the past decade would qualify—with the probable exception of Bill Bradley, the banker's son.

Phil Chenier definitely qualified. In 1971, Chenier was feeling so low he couldn't dunk in a wastepaper

basket. His mother was about to undergo a second major operation for cancer. He had just learned that his younger brother was a diabetic. His father's salary as a shipping clerk in a Berkeley, Calif., school district was already stretched to its limit. The family lived in a two-bedroom flat in the rear of a beat-up, aging white frame triplex. They had no luxuries. Not even a car. And they had no idea where the money for the growing stack of medical bills was going to come from.

At the time, Chenier was a junior at the University of California, playing guard on a lackluster basketball team. His skills were overshadowed on the West Coast by the entire UCLA starting lineup, and even by three taller starters on his own team. Early in the spring of 1971, the two professional leagues had drafted the finest collection of college talent in over a decade. A dozen seniors—including Artis Gilmore, Sidney Wicks, Austin Carr and Elmore Smith—had become instant millionaires. Next to those stars—and such fellow guards as Dean Meminger and John Roche—Chenier was an unknown, desperate for attention. Chenier was also desperate for money. His chances

of getting either seemed ridiculously slim.

But in June, 1971, Chenier got his break. The NBA announced its hardship draft, a special supplementary draft. Any team that made a selection would forfeit its first-round pick in the regular draft in 1972. Compared to the cornucopia of 1971, the next year's draft would be barren, and so several teams seemed willing to take a gamble on a hardship case. Chenier applied and was accepted along with five other underclassmen—Cyril Baptiste, Tom Payne, Joe Hammond, Nate Williams and Ed Owens. In this group—Baptiste had to fight rumors of drug use; Payne was later charged with rape—Chenier was a standout.

The Chicago Bulls contacted Chenier and told him they intended to draft him. Chenier went out and booked himself on a plane to Chicago, packed his bags and slept with them next to his bed the night before the draft. The next morning, his mother woke him up and told him he had a long-distance phone call from New York. He ran to the phone, grabbed it and the voice at the other end said, "Congratulations. We have just drafted



Hardship

CONTINUED

you. You are now a Bullet."

Chenier thought he'd heard wrong. After all, he was still groggy from a sleepless night of anticipation. And Bulls does sound like Bullets. But soon the voice identified itself as Gene Shue, the coach of the Baltimore Bullets. When Shue closed with "See you in Baltimore," Chenier knew he'd booked the wrong flight. He just stood there staring at the phone for a while. He didn't know how to react. He was thrilled to be getting a shot at the pros. But he was disappointed to be going to a team that already had three solid guards—Earl Monroe, Kevin Loughery and Fred Carter. Why did they want him? How did they even know about him?

The Bullets had discovered Chenier quite by accident. General manager Bob Ferry had gone to see California play to scout Charles Johnson and Ansley Truitt, the team's two big men. But he came away more impressed by the six-foot-three guard. He saw Chenier again in the basketball trials for the Pan-American games and he ran back to Baltimore to tell Gene Shue that they had to have this kid. "When I scout a player, I look for one who plays like a guy in the league who has made it," Ferry says. "I saw an immediate likeness to the looks and playing style of (Walt) Frazier. You don't see many college players who you feel won't have defensive problems coming into the league. Chenier and Frazier were that kind."

Chenier flew to Baltimore to sign a contract. He didn't get anything near the million dollars that the collegians with the scrapbooks full of press clippings were getting. But the three-year pact for about \$50,000 a year looked like a million to Chenier. "It's like an overnight change," he said. "One year I'm at Cal free-

lancing it, the next I have a job making more money than I ever thought of. I still have to pinch myself to see if it's real." The money was more than enough to relieve the Cheniers' financial burden. Phil paid all the family medical bills. And he bought his parents their first car.

Chenier reported to the Bullets' training camp in September and, despite Ferry's lavish praise, found himself playing behind the three established guards. That didn't last for long. Earl Monroe, the unique stylist who attracted Baltimore's downtowners to the Civic Center, decided he wanted to be traded. The Bullets wouldn't think of it. Then, on a Friday night early in the season, the Knicks showed up to face the Bullets. A full house showed up to see the teams play. But Monroe didn't show up. In less than two weeks, he was sent to New York in exchange for Mike Riordan and Dave Stallworth, and Phil Chenier became Baltimore's third guard behind Carter and Loughery. A few months later, Ferry traded his two veteran guards to Philadelphia for Archie Clark. Chenier was suddenly a starting guard. He has been ever since.

During the rest of the 1971-72 season, Chenier was the *other* guard in the Bullet backcourt; Phil averaged slightly more than 12 points a game; the veteran Clark averaged more than 25. But at the beginning of the 1972-73 season, Clark got into a bitter salary dispute with the management and sat out the first 43 games of the season. The team turned to Chenier to run the show. He was the high scorer in 23 of the 43 games Clark missed and scored 53 one night against Portland. He finished the season averaging 19.7 points per game. Chenier's 1973-74 statistics were even better. He led

the team in scoring with a 21.9 average, blocked more shots than any guard in the league and was one of only two starters in the league who had fewer fouls than steals. Phil Chenier was now *the* guard in the Bullet backcourt. Kevin Porter was the *other* guard, and Archie Clark was shipped to Seattle.

Phil's emergence as a star was not only recognized in Baltimore. The NBA players elected him to the 1973-74 all-league team. "There are only two guards in the league, Phil and Frazier. They are above everyone else," says K.C. Jones, the Bullets coach, reviving the comparison that Ferry made upon seeing Chenier for the first time, a comparison that has been made ever since. The two backcourt stars, Chenier and Frazier, resemble each other so much they could easily be taken for brothers in a Pioneer Stereo advertisement they do together. And they play the game similarly—control guards who run their teams; smooth, high-percentage jump-shooters and tenacious ball-hawking defensive specialists. "Next to me, Phil is the most complete player in the league," Frazier says with his usual reserve, and his usual pride.

The biggest difference in their games is in temperament. Frazier is relaxed almost to the point of aloofness. He has never had a technical foul called on him in a regular-season game. Chenier is explosive to the point where it affects his play. His outbursts cost him technical fouls with disturbing frequency. Frazier will play his game no matter what the circumstances, but Chenier can ruin a good night with his temper. A vivid example came in the fifth game of the playoff series between the Knicks and Bullets last season. It was a close game throughout and both guards were having good days. The game went into overtime, and the Knicks started roughing up Chenier a bit. At one point, when Bill Bradley ran into him, Chenier turned and threw a wild punch which hit Frazier on the chin. Frazier didn't look at Chenier, but just stroked his beard a bit. Then he took over the game, and Chenier

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A color photograph of a man and a woman on a boat. The man, wearing a blue jacket and a white cap, is smiling and holding a blue bag. The woman, wearing a red and black plaid shirt, is leaning over the side of the boat. They are surrounded by various pieces of luggage, including a blue bag, a green bag, and a fishing net. In the background, there are dense green trees. In the foreground, there are two packs of Raleigh cigarettes: one labeled 'Filter Kings' and another labeled 'Super Longs'. A green Coleman Gasoline Camp Stove is also visible in the foreground.

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Hardship

CONTINUED

fell apart. The Knicks won, 106-105. Frazier scored 38 points.

The temperament problem on the court appears to be out of character for Chenier, who seems perfectly composed off court. He feels it may stem from his youth. "I used to get punished all the time as a kid," Chenier explains. "I'd throw temper tantrums in the class rooms in grade school. Teachers would send notes home to my parents."

But Chenier learned to contain his youthful explosions. His mother still remembers the time her son came home from school and pleaded with her to come see him play ball. "Mom, I've improved my game," Phil said. "But what I really want you to see is how much I've improved my temper."

If Chenier's fuse is now short again, it could well be because of the enormous pressure on him. Only three years after his college class graduated, he is the player responsible for guiding a team that could win the NBA championship. The Bullets have been the most consistent team in the NBA through much of the current season, thanks largely to Chenier's backcourt leadership, to the rebounding muscle of Wes Unseld and to the scoring of Elvin Hayes, whose all-around play has progressed so much he no longer sees the adjective "selfish" propped, like a label, in front of his name. Anything less than a championship would have to be a disappointment to this team.

Chenier claims that for years he set

goals that were too low for himself. "Now I look back, I see how easy it is for a person to shortchange himself," he says. To compensate, he has taken the other extreme—expecting too much from himself. And when he does not live up to his expectations, he finds it hard to control himself.

"I worry about the things people say," he says. "I want to live up to them. I'm flattered by the comparison to Clyde, because he is the best. But I also want to develop an identity of my own."

Chenier certainly has gained more recognition than any of those other five players in the first hardship draft. (Only Nate Williams is still in the league.) In fact, he has put himself on a par with the best of those other college stars drafted in the big payoff of 1971. Last August, Phil Chenier was given the certificate that officially made him a part of that group—a seven-year contract with the Baltimore-now-Washington Bullets, a contract worth a total of one million dollars. ■

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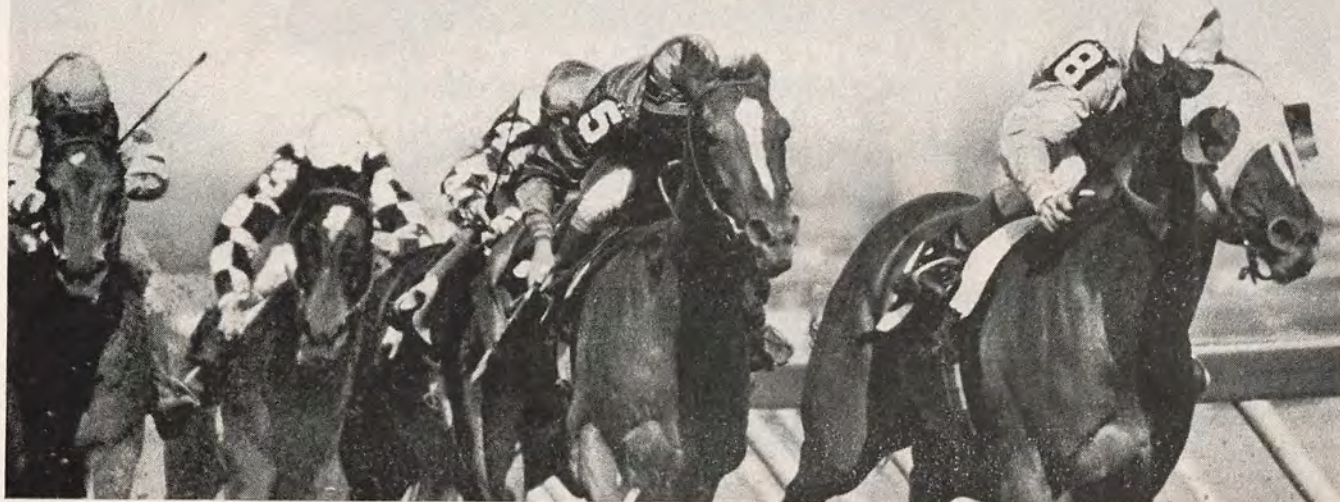


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There is something in the old baseball scout reminding us of grandfatherly chats, squeaky slippers, soft wine and a knowledge gained only through experience. They have been there in rickety skeletal bleachers in small Iowa towns and on grassy knolls at downtown St. Louis playgrounds, witnessing it all—wild-swinging young brutes who would discover the curve ball in Class D the year after signing, burly Okies who would turn out to be afraid to pitch in front of crowds, crew-cut shortstops who would invest their \$8,000 bonus in beer and pool and frowzy blondes in McAlester, Oklahoma—and now the men who discovered stars and coerced them into playing professional baseball, turn up, graying and sixtyish, wiser than the rest of us. After the frantic years of squinting out onto

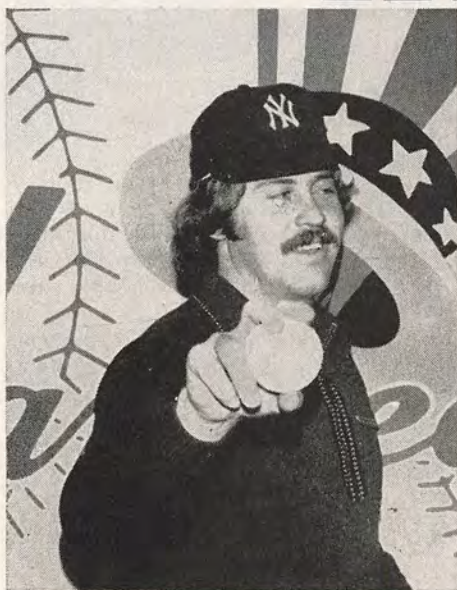
hard-baked skinned infields, abruptly having to adjust their eyes from deepest centerfield to the stopwatch in their wrinkled hands, they come down to wearing loose alpaca sweaters and lazily lipping slender cigars and treading gentlemanly on broken-in Hush Puppies and speaking warmly to the parents of top prospects.

Such is George Pratt. It is turning dark on the day after Christmas. Pratt, who got as high as Triple-A as a player and has been recently put out to pasture as a "birddog" scout for the Pittsburgh

Pirates due to heart trouble, is sitting in the lobby of the Tomahawk Motel in Ahoskie, North Carolina, mumbling soft exchanges with a stumpy aggressive fellow named Dutch Overton, the assistant principal at Ahoskie High, in the barren swampy stretches of far northeastern North Carolina. They are idly waiting for the Pirates hierarchy to fly in the next morning and try to sign the best pitcher ever to come out of this part of the country: Jim (Catfish) Hunter, a high school phenomenon who went on to establish himself as genuine Hall of Fame stuff with the Oakland A's.. These days, after a petulant violation of his contract by A's owner Charles O. Finley, Hunter trucks into his Ahoskie lawyers' offices each morning in a gray mud-spattered Ford pickup with a dog pen in the back. Then Hunter spits tobacco

BY PAUL HEMPHILL

THE YANKEES



**Catfish
Hunter**

FISH FOR A



**Bobby
Bonds**

PENNANT

PENNANT

CONTINUED

juice into a styrofoam coffee cup while major league owners and their accountants sit at the other end of a long walnut conference table in a back room, wearing elegant dark suits and rummaging through stacks of tax tables and such, earnestly competing to make him the highest-paid player in the history of baseball. This has been going on for about ten days now, and should end in about a week, when all of the clubs not faint-of-heart have their cards on the table. It is not unlike the auctioning-off of a prize bull.

"Time really flies, all right," Dutch Overton is saying. "It wasn't ten, maybe twelve, years ago I was assistant baseball coach over at Hertford where Jim was playing. We was always short of money and most times I'd wind up umpiring our games behind the plate. They'd always say, 'No wonder Jimmy wins, he brings his own umpire.'"

"Competitive spirit played a part, too," says Pratt.

"Say y'all talk with 'em in the morning?"

"Us in the morning. Cincinnati in the afternoon."

"Jim's out hunting, if I know him."

"I would imagine that's the case, Dutch."

Pratt is showing off his 1971 World Series ring to a motel guest when Overton asks who he thinks will eventually sign Hunter. "The Yankees," he says. "Clyde Kluttz is their top scout, and he and Jim go hunting together all the time. Jim could make an awful lot of extra money in New York, don't forget that. And the Yankees can start winning pennants again if they get him. If I had to bet on it, I'd say the Yankees."

When it was announced at a frantic press conference on New Year's Eve of 1974 in New York that the Yankees had persuaded Jim Hunter

to sign what was easily the most awesome contract in the history of major league baseball—the five-year package came to an estimated \$3.75 million, including salary and insurance and deferred bonuses—the whole story read, in retrospect, like a novel. It involved a Southern country boy suddenly inspired to give it his best shot in *The Big Apple*, an indicted club owner forced by the commissioner of baseball to stay out of the negotiations, a general manager putting the finishing touches on what could become another Yankee dynasty, a kindly veteran scout who got the job done through the back door with old-fashioned friendship and trust, a sleepy little tobacco-and-farming town abruptly basking in national prominence, a mercurial sports entrepreneur finally letting his arrogance and stubbornness get the best of him, a generous portion of vindictiveness from several sides and, less pronounced, a general restlessness over the traditional notion that a player is a slave until proved otherwise. The cast:

- James Augustus (Catfish) Hunter. Born and raised on a farm near Hertford, some 50 miles from Ahoskie on Albemarle Sound, signed with the then-Kansas City Athletics for \$75,000 bonus in 1964 and is now, at 28, the premier pitcher in baseball. Because fishing is a passion, he was nicknamed "Catfish" by Finley as a gimmick. Has won 88 games and lost only 35 over the past four seasons, with a career earned-run average of 3.12 (and in 37 World Series innings is 4-0 and 2.19). A country-cool good old boy, he is devoted to his childhood-sweetheart wife and two children and stays close to his roots. Salary with the A's in '74 was \$100,000.

- Charles O. Finley. Controversial, free-wheeling owner of the Oakland A's who is always in the spotlight: For proposing orange-colored baseballs, for designing garish uniforms, for once firing a second baseman who had botched a couple of plays in a Series game, for trying to make pitcher Vida Blue change his first name to "True," for cutting corners on ac-

commodations and salaries in spite of three straight World Series clubs. When he delayed paying Hunter the remaining \$50,000 on his '74 contract, Hunter was declared a free agent by an arbitration panel. After the Yankees signed Hunter, Finley paid the \$50,000 and said he would take the matter to the Supreme Court if necessary.

- The Yankees. Having traded Bobby Murcer even-up to San Francisco for Bobby Bonds in a case of grand larceny at the trading block, the Yankees are a gathering storm in the American League, thanks in large part to president-and-general manager Gabe Paul's uncanny purchases and trades of late. In the Hunter pursuit, the Yankees were driven by revenge also: Toward Finley for not releasing Dick Williams from a contract with the A's so he could manage the Yankees; and toward commissioner Bowie Kuhn for not helping them in the Williams tussle and for slapping a two-year suspension on a club general partner, George Steinbrenner, for being indicted for making illegal political campaign contributions.

- Clyde Kluttz. Originally from the Ahoskie/Hertford area, Kluttz is the scout who first signed Hunter for the Athletics a decade ago and is now, at 57, the Yankees' super-scout. A mediocre catcher for nine seasons with five big-league clubs, the most Kluttz ever earned in one season was \$10,000 and "I deserved every penny of it." Hunter: "He never lied to me. He's my friend. That's why I signed with the A's, and that's why I signed with the Yankees."

- The Bit Players. There was pitcher Gaylord Perry who came up from nearby Williamston trying to talk his old buddy into going with the Cleveland Indians. And the dean of major league managers, saintly Walter Alston of near-legendary posture, who wanted Hunter badly enough to fly coast-to-coast for a chat. And Gene Autry, the old cowboy movie star and singer who now owns the California Angels, who stood on the streets of Ahoskie handing out autographed

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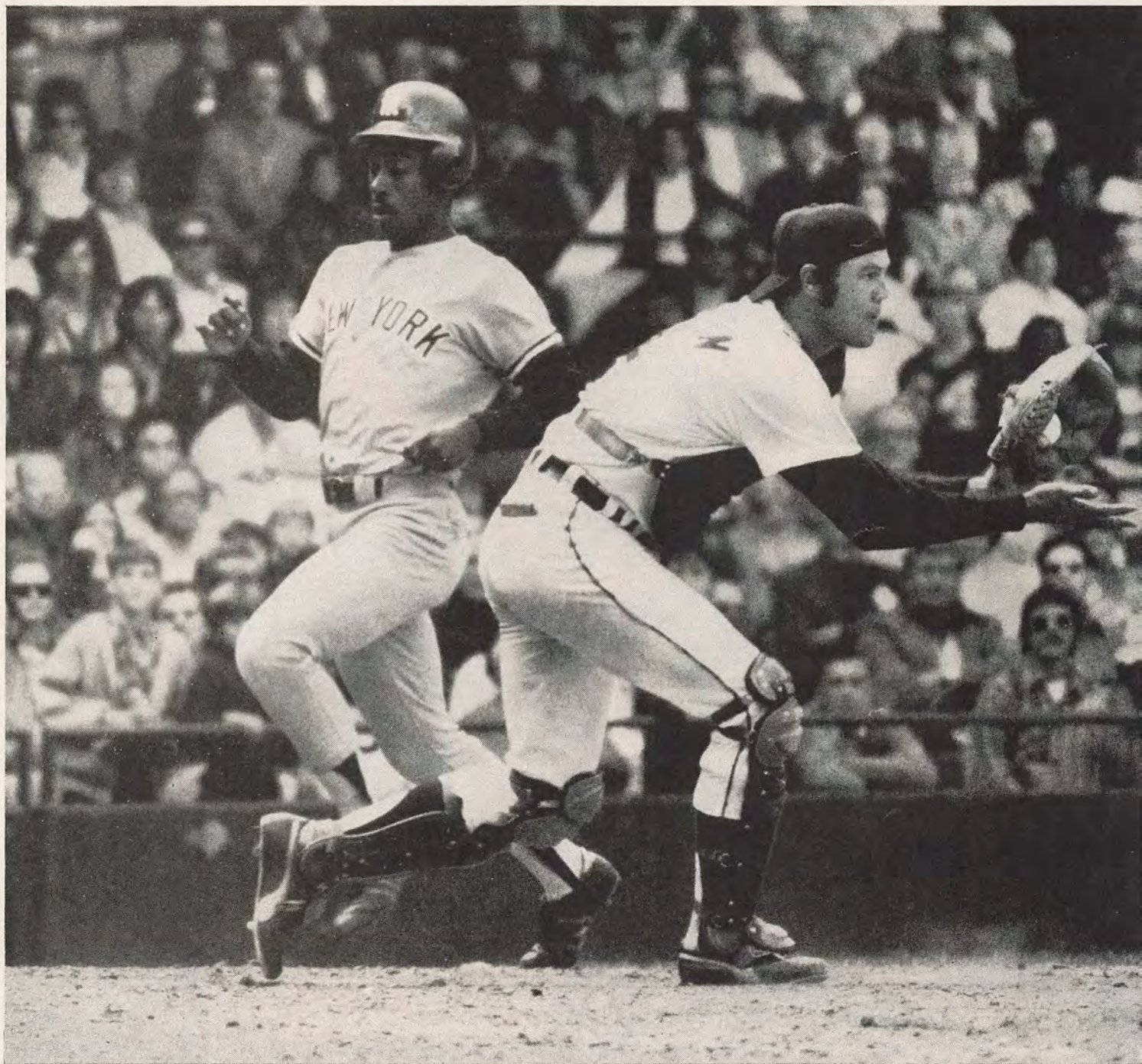
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PENNANT

CONTINUED

Christmas albums he has recorded. And A's manager Al Dark, who showed up with his wife one night at the Hunter spread, claiming he "just happened to be coming this

way" for some appearances. And Dick Williams, Hunter's friend and former A's manager, now managing the Angels, in Ahoskie also to do some ear-bending. And even attorney Dick Moss of the Major League Baseball Players Association, instrumental in breaking Finley's hold on Hunter, and as a result—time will tell—possibly tearing a chink in the historical "reserve

The Yanks put up \$3 million for a 20-game winner; last year, they got a .300-hitter, Elliott Maddox (above), for dimes.

clause" binding a player to one club for life unless traded or sold.

Much of the story's charm lay, of course, in its setting. Hunter lives an hour away, on a 113-acre farm, but when it was determined that he was free to sign with any major

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At
the
Shoe
Place

PENNANT

CONTINUED

league club, Ahoskie was selected as the bargaining table since that is where Hunter's lawyers work out of a quaint old two-story brick building on Main Street. The second-largest town in sparsely-populated northeastern North Carolina, Ahoskie (Pop. 5,500) is a farmer's delight with ten churches, a handful of family-style restaurants, an ample supply of feed-and-seed stores and tobacco warehouses, and a textile mill which employs nearly 400 workers. Only twice in memory has the town attracted any sort of national attention: When Lady Bird Johnson made a train stop to promote her national beautification project (the train doesn't stop there anymore, however); and when the funeral was held for a native son killed while performing with the Air Force's acrobatic Blue Angels. It is baseball country, though—from the area over the years have come such major league players as Tom Umphlett, Enos Slaughter, Stuart Martin, Jim and Gaylord Perry and many more.

It was in Hertford (Pop. 2,023), some 50 miles south of Norfolk, that Jim Hunter was born—the last of four sons—to a tenant farmer and \$2-a-day logger named Abbott Hunter. Life wasn't easy, but when the chores were done Jim found himself competing with his bigger brothers at whatever sport they could concoct. And he was growing up big and tough and strong—as a freshman at Perquimans High School in Hertford, he stood six feet tall and already weighed nearly 175—making him a prep star in both football and baseball his full four years. "He was just a big old country kid who liked it rough," recalls Bobby Carter, who coached Hunter at Perquimans High and now coaches at Roanoke Rapids, N.C. Hunter was a linebacker and offensive end in football ("He could've probably been a pretty

good player at one of the smaller colleges"), but it was in baseball that he began to attract attention. Playing shortstop and batting clean-up when he wasn't pitching, Hunter would eventually pitch five no-hitters during his high school career—one of them a perfect game on the day following Easter Sunday of 1963—and bring the major league scouts flocking to the front porch of his father's farmhouse. This was in 1964, the last year of open bidding for young talent before the free-agent draft era began, and one night in the living room of the house, Jim Hunter signed his bonus contract with the Kansas City Athletics and Clyde Klutznick.

Those were the days when bonus babies still had to remain on the major league club's roster, rather than be farmed out for nursing in the minors, so Hunter spent the summer of his eighteenth year pitching batting practice and occasionally posing for gimmicky publicity pictures sitting in the lap of 59-year-old pitcher Satchel Paige—another Finley stunt, and possibly the very beginning of Hunter's dislike of the man. During the '65 and '66 seasons Hunter won only 17 games and lost 19, but he came forward as a star in 1967—the A's last year in Kansas City before Finley moved the franchise to Oakland—when his earned-run average abruptly dipped to 2.80. In 1968 he became the first American Leaguer to pitch a regular-season perfect game in 46 years, and in '71 he began a string of 20-game seasons which now stands at four straight. Last year, when he finished 25-12 with a 2.49 ERA, he won the Cy Young Award.

But there was bad blood brewing between Hunter and Finley. Who can figure Finley? He gave Hunter \$75,000 to sign, \$5,000 for pitching his perfect game, another big bonus for winning 21 games in 1971, an investment in '72 which netted Hunter \$15,000 after taxes, and once loaned him \$150,000 to buy nearly 500 acres adjoining his own 100 in Hertford. That loan from Finley came in 1970, and it was verbally

agreed that Hunter would pay back at least \$20,000 at the end of each season, plus six per cent interest, until it was all paid off.

"We never had anything down on paper," Hunter was saying one day at Ahoskie during a lull in negotiations with the various clubs. "I appreciated the loan. I really wanted that land next to my place. I knew I could pay back the money every year, with the kind of money I was making with the A's. But we got into the season, down into August, and Finley started hounding me about the money. I said, 'But I'm supposed to pay you when the season's over,' and he said, 'I know, but I'm buying a hockey team and a basketball team and I need the money.' Well, the worst part was, it seemed like he never called me about it except on days when I was going to pitch. I started eight games that August and didn't have a single win the whole month. I was worried. One time I asked him why he never called except when I was pitching and he said he didn't know who was going to pitch when. That's bull. Charley Finley knows more about that ball club than the manager. Whoever the manager might be in a given year."

That was the beginning of the end of their relationship. Hunter sold off most of the 500-odd acres he had bought with the loan, so he could pay Finley back at the end of the year. From that moment on, he simply laid low and tried to forget about everything except getting batters out, which he was now doing masterfully, and his tactics were working until he let Finley charm him into a two-year contract calling for \$100,000 a year beginning with the '74 season ("It was the fastest contract I ever signed; I don't know what got into me"), only to see lesser players take their dealings with Finley to arbitration and, in some cases, win more pay. When Finley piddled around about paying half of last year's salary to Hunter's agent in deferred payments, Hunter immediately pounced. This time he contacted Dick Moss of the players' association, got the matter before

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PENNANT

CONTINUED

an arbitration board, and became an ex-Oakland A. "I felt like I'd just gotten out of prison," says Hunter, "even if I did regret how the other players might feel about my leaving the club." Said A's slugger Reggie Jackson: "With Catfish we were world champions. Without him, we have to struggle to win the division." With Finley pleading he had never fully understood his obligations in the contract, and vowing there would be hell to pay for anyone who dared sign Hunter, the battle was engaged.

At 8:30 in the morning three days after Christmas, J. Carlton Cherry—a bulky, balding native who is senior partner of Cherry, Cherry and Flythe Attorneys—was already in his office, cleaning out wastebaskets from the night before. Cherry and Jim Hunter have been associated since Hunter signed his first contract and "discovered a baseball player needs help on some things." For better than a week now, Cherry and his partners and a harried coterie of secretaries had presided over a small mob scene which took place each day, all day. Another delegation of major league executives would arrive and, for an hour or more, retire to a small conference room with Cherry and Hunter to make its proposition.

Carlton Cherry is no small-town hayseed lawyer working from a squeaky swivel chair in front of great-granddaddy's roll-top desk. Although this was easily the biggest project he had ever handled, he had methodically gone about his business—making discreet calls to baseball and sports-agentry people to get the feel of the new opportunities open to athletes, sitting down with Hunter to put down precisely what was most important to him and his family, finally declaring that the store was open—and he stood to earn enough off the month's work

he was putting in to allow two more generations of Cherrys the very best North Carolina can offer. The Tigers, the Orioles and the Cardinals never entered the bidding for Hunter, for lack of that kind of money and for fears about wrecking team morale, but the 21 other clubs had been busily exerting every imaginable pressure. Some clubs sent in personal friends of Hunter's, as the Brewers did in dispatching Mike Hegan, an ex-A's teammate, to Ahoskie. Other clubs would undermine the Yankees and Mets by using Hunter's devotion to family ("God, Jim, your wife wouldn't even dare go to the grocery store in that jungle up there"). "We're looking at the overall picture," said Cherry. "The living conditions. Whether the club is a contender. The ballpark, and whether it is a 'pitcher's park.' The money, of course. The security. The total package. We've told every club it has an equal opportunity, even Oakland, and that we'll do no horse-trading and make no special deals with any club."

The Yankees were going after Catfish Hunter with the doggedness of Hunter, himself, stalking a deer along a somber inlet on Albemarle Sound, and they intended to get him. Their nearness to a string of pennants was a driving force, and a bargaining point. The magic of the Yankee name—the Yankees almost never lost when Jim Hunter was growing up—was another asset. And they knew that, when it came down to the crunch, they had in their corner a fellow named Clyde Kluttz.

Clyde Franklin Kluttz was raised in the same part of America as Jim Hunter, knowing the same baying of dogs and lapping of water and loose feeling of hanging around the steps of a country store telling lies and enjoying the company of men in no hurry to do anything more than savor life to the palate. Ten years ago, scouring the Southeast for prospects in behalf of the Kansas City Athletics, he spent countless afternoons keeping watch over

young Jimmy Hunter of Perquimans High in Hertford, N.C., and countless evenings having supper with the Hunters and discussing the possibility of their son making a career out of professional baseball. He, like George Pratt of the Pittsburgh Pirates, was that grandfatherly sort a farm family and a wide-eyed young prospect could trust, and when Hunter's free-agency was declared, Kluttz knew what to do. He flew to Norfolk, rented a car, drove to Hertford and checked in for an indefinite stay at a motel 12 miles from Hunter's home.

While the executives and scouts from the other clubs made their appointments through Carlton Cherry and flashed in for their sit-down discussions, Clyde Kluttz sat in his motel and read papers and watched television. When the day began to close down, he got in his car and drove over for a family visit with Hunter. *What about living around New York?* Hunter would ask. *Look, Kluttz would say, I hated it too, at first, but people are people. You've got good ones and bad ones.* But San Diego says they'll pay me anything I want, Hunter would say. Kluttz would ask how many players from provincial cities like San Diego ever made the Hall of Fame. It was a steady, logical, neighborly, sensible bombardment which Jim Hunter could not resist. *When you are talking about \$3 million-plus, what's a few thousand?* The Yankees had the cash. The Yankees would be, with him as their ace pitcher, in the World Series. There would be all of the endorsements and other side money in New York; money generally unavailable if you play in San Diego or Kansas City or Texas or Pittsburgh. If eight million people could manage to survive in New York, why couldn't Jim and his family? Boiled down like that, tossing and turning over it in the shank of the night with his childhood girlfriend at his side, Jim Hunter could make but one decision. The Yankees. The Big Apple.

There would be the logistics of it,



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CONTINUED

following the decision. The Yankees could save considerable money on taxes if the contract were signed during 1974. A press conference was called for New Year's Eve, at the Yankee offices in Flushing. An attorney for the Yankees named Ed Greenwald scribbled out the terms of the contract on 10 pages of yellow legal paper as he flew by private jet to North Carolina. Cherry and Hunter met the jet at a country airport, and the jet flew on to New York. Limousines were waiting. The group went to the Yankees' offices, and then merriment, with the press corps furiously recording the occasion. A fishing pole, bought for \$13.21 at a sporting goods store on New Year's Eve, was presented Hunter by an aide to Mayor Abe Beame. Clyde Kluttz was introduced and admitted he "did bawl a bit." Gabe Paul passed out a statement saying that George Steinbrenner had not been allowed to actively work in the negotiations, but that

he had "told me, 'Anytime you have an opportunity to buy the contract of a player for cash, I want you to go ahead whenever, in your judgment, it would be advantageous to the Yankees.'" At a bar along Third Avenue, celebrating New Year's Eve when he heard the news, a fellow said to a Daily News reporter, "What does this mean for the price of hot dogs, peanuts and beer?"

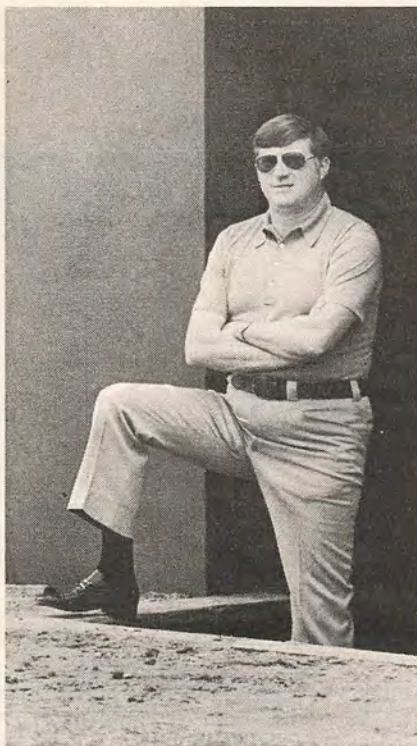
Yes. And along that line, there were those columnists and commentators who would, during the weeks following the signing of Catfish Hunter for more than \$3 million to pitch baseballs, speak with outrage at the very notion that such amounts of money could fall into the hands of individuals—be it Hunter, the president of General Motors or Nelson Rockefeller—at a time in American history when unemployment and inflation were coupling to make it difficult for millions of Americans to put bread on the table or buy a full tank of gasoline. "How can a nation be in dire financial straits and yet treat its linebackers and pitchers as if they were a great natural, irreplaceable resource like gold or oil?" wrote Jean Shephard in the

New York Times News Service. In spite of the excitement the Hunter contract generated nationally, this aspect of the story was not entirely lost on the citizens of Ahoskie, N.C.

Joe Andrusia is not as articulate as, say, Jean Shepherd, but during the two weeks of visitations by major league executives and lawyers, the imbalance of it all had been gnawing at him. Andrusia, 59, runs the barbershop in Ahoskie, directly across Main Street from the Cherry law offices, and had himself a ringside seat for the whole affair. Late one morning he sat in one of his barber chairs, wearing his white shirt and Hush Puppies, reading in the Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot* about the death of Jack Benny, listening to gospel music on the radio. It was nearly noon, and there had been only one customer so far. "Kids don't even get haircuts anymore," he said, "and the working folks have taken to letting the wife do the job to save money."

"Been quite a show around here," he was told.

"Ah," he grunted. "I wouldn't walk across the street to see Gene Autry. Him or any of the rest. All



While Gabe Paul (left) builds the new Yankees for a new park, owner George Steinbrenner can't go in the dugout.

of these people wanting to give one man that kind of money." Bored, Andrusia folded the newspaper and walked to the plate-glass window, idly slapping his leg with the paper. "Why should I be so excited when this doesn't put money in my pocket? Hunter's not from here. All he spends around here is dimes for parking." There was a swirl around the entrance to the building across the street as reporters and a network television crew pounced and bounded after the big-league officials as they walked briskly to their limousine. Andrusia shrugged his shoulders and mounted the barber's chair again. "Jack Benny," he said. "He had a test for cancer just a month ago and they said it was all gone. He kept complaining, but the doctors said to quit worrying. Then, all of a sudden, he dies from cancer. You've got that kind of stuff going on, and people out of work, and families starving, and that Water-gate mess, and now they're over there across the street trying to give some country boy \$4 million. Something's wrong somewhere." ■

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The Fine Art Of Fielding Has Never Been Finer

BY STANLEY FRANK

Enshrined in baseball's myth and romance
Is Chicago's Tinker to Evers to Chance,
But that d.p. combo was never the menace
Of the A's Campaneris to Green to Tenace

The running gag during the last World Series was to describe Dick Green as Oakland's designated non-hitter, and Green kept the gag alive

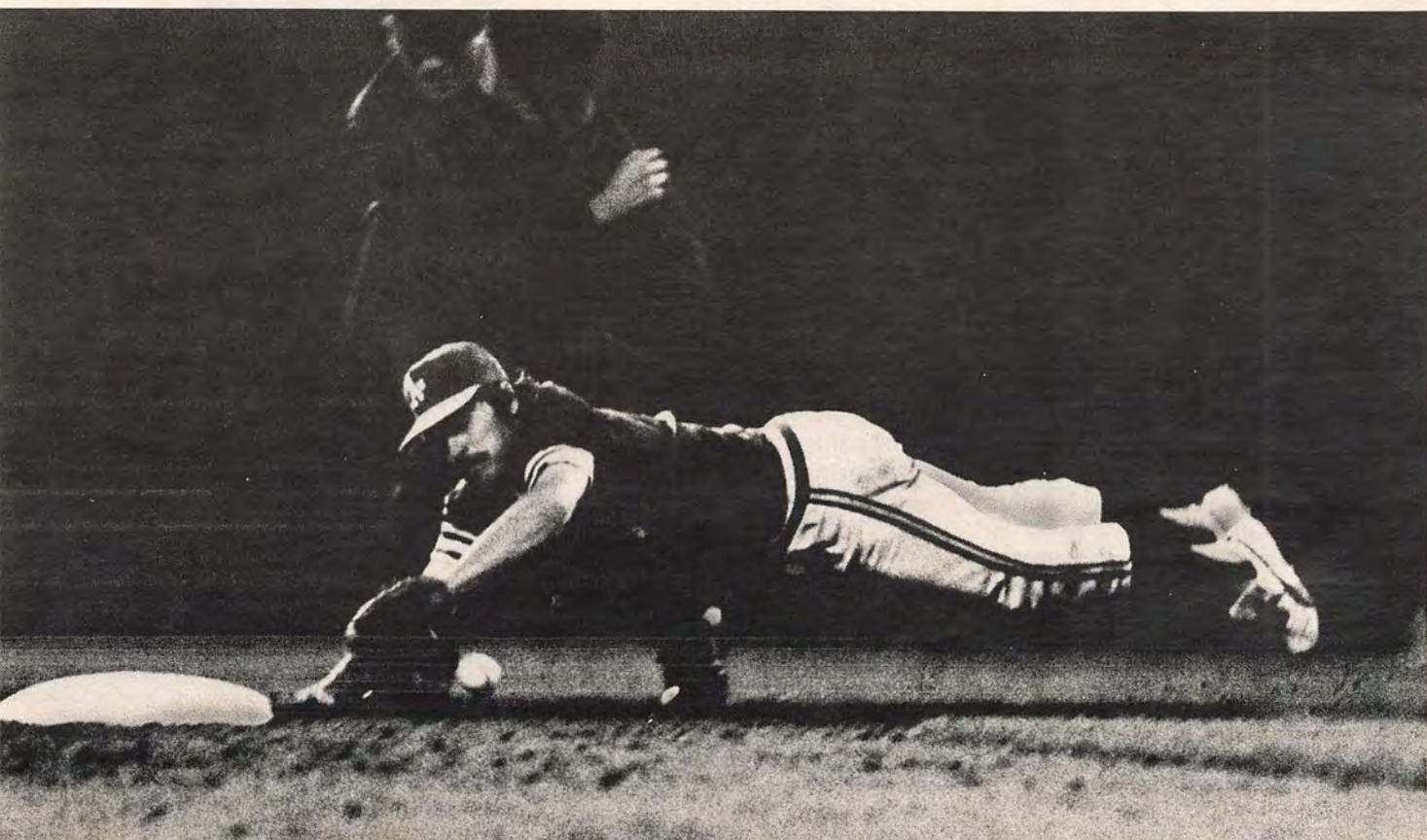
by failing to get even a single in 13 at-bats. Yet when the writers selected the Most Valuable Player of the Series, Green narrowly missed winning the award. He had saved—literally saved—three games with his fielding.

Green's dramatics at second base underscored the greatest improvement in baseball during the last half-century: The fielding of today is inordinately superior to that of the past. The records clearly prove that

men who dominate the nominations to the "All-Time Baseball Team" could not play defense as well as even the journeymen currently scrabbling for jobs in the major leagues.

Old-timers may have some basis for argument when they contend that today's top pitchers cannot approximate the Johnsons and

If Dick Green's bat were as potent as his glove (below), he would have hit a ton for Oakland in the 1974 World Series.



Mathewsons, who regularly won 25 to 35 games a year. They can point out, with truth, that batting titles are now won with averages 50 points below those of the so-called Golden Age and that three times as many .300 hitters flourished then. But there can be no debate when the subject is fielding.

The evidence is conclusive. First, consider that in a lineup composed of players with the best lifetime fielding averages at their positions, five are still active and the remaining four have retired within the last dozen years. With eight full seasons required to qualify, here is the All-Time fielding team and the lifetime percentages of its members (parentheses enclose each man's most recent season):

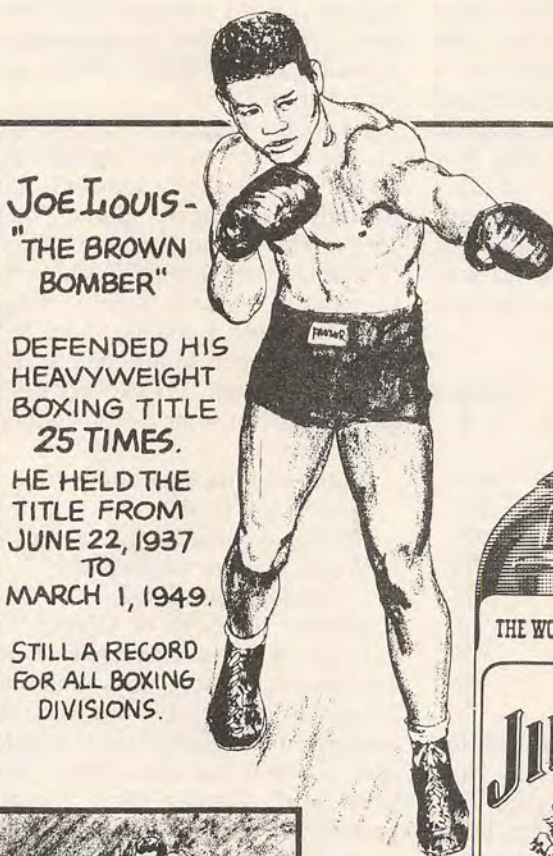
1B — Wes Parker (1972)	.9956
2B — Nellie Fox (1963)	.9835
3B — Brooks Robinson (1975)	.9710
SS — Mark Belanger (1975)	.9733
OF — Mickey Stanley (1975)	.9928
Pete Rose (1975)	.9921
Jimmy Piersall (1967)	.9900
C — Bill Freehan (1975)	.9938
P — Don Mossi (1965)	.9900

"One of these days people suddenly will realize that the best defensive infield ever seen is playing for Baltimore now," says Phil Rizzuto, who played shortstop on nine Yankee pennant-winners before retiring in 1956 to become a broadcaster. "There never has been a steadier pair on the right side than Robinson and Belanger. Boog Powell is no gazelle, but he catches everything hit and thrown to him at first base. The guy who really clinches it for the Orioles, though, is the newest guy, Bobby Grich, the second baseman.

"The toughest play in the business is the second baseman's pivot on a double play. Grich is a wonder at it. Even better than Joe Gordon, an acrobat who teamed up with me in the forties and was tops in my book until Grich came along. Most second basemen, after making the

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PENNANT

CONTINUED

forceout, take a step toward the mound to get away from the sliding runner before throwing to first, and the delay blows a close play. Grich unloads the ball right on the bag, no matter how hard he's belted. Two years ago, he made only five errors in one hundred and sixty-two games. That's miraculous."

Obviously, a few talented fielders who might have appeared coincidentally do not constitute a trend. So, as further proof, consider the progressive improvement in fielding statistics since the 1900s. Backing up from 1974, the following chart shows—at ten-year intervals—the major-league fielding average for a season and the number of errors and double plays made, on the average, by a big-league team during that season. Since most of the top players of the 1940s were in military service during 1944, that year has not been included; 1946—the year in which they returned to baseball—has been substituted.

	Errors Per Team	DPS Per Team	League F.A.
1974	149	158	.977
1964	142	146	.977
1954	142	161	.976
1946	155	145	.974
1934	174	144	.971
1924	192	146	.970
1914	269	107	.959
1904	294	87	.955

Compare recent statistics with the figures before 1920, when the "legendary immortals" made their reputations. Players of that era made nearly twice as many errors as the current major-leaguers, although they played eight fewer games a season. They also made approximately one-third fewer double plays. Moreover, when I was an official scorer in the 1930s, it had long been traditional to call a questionable play a hit rather than an error. This made both the batter

and fielder happy, and saved the scorer from a punch in the mouth—although the pitcher occasionally complained.

That philosophy of scoring has since changed, but while it lasted it not only held down the number of errors made in a season, but also helped increase batting averages. Over the course of a season, each hit adds two points to an average of .300 or higher. Ty Cobb, who batted .367 over 24 years, was an authentic superstar, but it is reasonable to suspect that with his exceptional speed he got at least 200 gifts and leg-hits on balls that would have been scored errors today or, more likely, would have been handled by the fielders. Take away those 200 hits and his lifetime average would have been .349, in the more mundane plane of Ted Williams (.344) and Stan Musial (.331).

As to the fielders of Cobb's era, Tinker to Evers to Chance has been a synonym for slick teamwork, particularly on double plays, since 1908. This is an amiable fiction, flowering from a jingle written by Franklin P. Adams, a rabid Giant fan who wrote a column for a New York newspaper. In his column, *The Conning Tower*, F.P.A. occasionally engaged in some poetic conning of his own:

Ruthlessly pricking our
gonfalon bubble,
Making a Giant hit into a double,
Words that are weighty with
nothing but trouble,
"Tinker to Evers to Chance."

It was a flagrant example of poetic license, in more ways than one. Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance was not considered baseball's best double-play combination even while their Cubs were winning three straight pennants from 1906 to 1908. In those days individual participation in double plays was not tabulated, but a few years ago Seymour Siwoff, the official statistician of the National League, made a painstaking search through old box-scores to find out how effective the trio really was.

"This is hard to believe, but they made only forty to fifty double

plays a season," Siwoff reported. "In 1908, when Adams wrote that verse, the entire Cub team made seventy-six double plays, less than the number accounted for by a mediocre keystone pair today."

Further, Tinker-to-Evers-to-Chance never accounted for a double play in the World Series. Each participated in World Series double plays, but—in 16 Series games—they failed to fashion one as a unit.

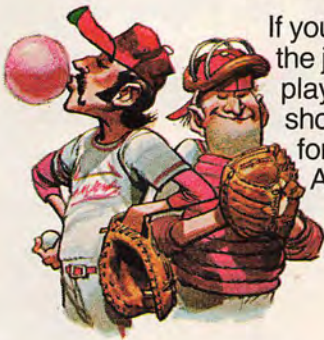
Last year, playing in less than two-thirds of Oakland's regular-season games, Green participated in 67 double plays while Campaneris was involved in 76, and Tenace in 80. In the World Series, the three A's collaborated on two double plays. Green himself took part in six double plays against Los Angeles, a record for a second baseman in a five-game Series.

"Fielding was the main difference between the teams," Walter Alson said after Oakland had beaten his Dodgers. It is the main difference, too, between the baseball played today and two generations ago. The variety of breaking balls thrown by pitchers is another major advance, but there is no question that improved fielding skills have contributed more to the rising artistic level of the game than any other factor.

Consider Honus Wagner, "The Flying Dutchman," who is the automatic selection at shortstop on any All-Time team; a more appropriate nickname would have been "The Dutch Butcher Boy." Wagner could do everything except play shortstop. He led the National League in batting eight times, was an excellent runner and had a strong arm, but he was a sieve at shortstop. Reporting Wagner's promotion to the big leagues in 1897, *The Sporting Life* commented: "He is a better outfielder than infielder." It was an accurate appraisal.

In his prime, Wagner consistently committed 50 errors a year, even with the lenient official scorers of that era. A young man who ruins 30 plays a season in the minors today is advised to take up a trade that does not demand especially deft hands—like, say, stomping grapes

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Fielding

CONTINUED

into wine.

Three years ago, Eddie Brinkman, hardly a household name, made seven errors at shortstop all season. In 1959, Ernie Banks had only 12 errors in 802 chances. Mark Belanger's career fielding average is .973 against Wagner's .946, yet the Butcher Boy still is rated the paragon of shortstops.

Another celebrated old-timer with hands of clay was Jimmy Collins, a third-baseman. They said it was impossible to hit a ball through Collins. Perhaps because he had a cast-iron chest. On grounders hit to either side, Collins was awful. He made as many as 50 errors a year and had a lifetime fielding average of .929. Brooks Robinson's average for 20 years is .971, and his ranking as baseball's premier third-baseman is being challenged by Don Money, who played 86 consecutive games without an error last year. These days, converted catchers and converted outfielders get thrown in at third base, and if they can't field better than .929, they get thrown out.

So it goes. Thousands of fans grew up convinced that better catchers than Bill Dickey and Mickey Cochrane never would be seen. The records now show that these idols must move over for Bill Freehan of the Tigers. Thousands more fans overestimated the defensive skills of a parade of second basemen—Nap Lajoie, Eddie Collins, Rogers Hornsby, Frank Frisch. In retrospect, these ancient players were considerably more formidable at bat than in the field.

It is customary to attribute the improvement in fielding to the truer bounces groundballs take because of artificial playing surfaces—and to gloves that can trap eels in their deep pockets. There is merit in both points, but deep-webbed gloves and artificial surfaces are fairly recent advents and fielding has been on the ascent far longer. Moreover, only

eight of today's 24 major-league ballparks have synthetic surfaces, an inconsistency which itself poses a problem for infielders. "It's very tough going from grass to AstroTurf, then switching back," says Rizzuto. "You've got to react faster on AstroTurf to grounders that take off a lot sharper than on grass. Infielders also need stronger arms on AstroTurf because they play deeper to cut off those balls. I couldn't make the grade at shortstop today with my weak arm, not with all the fast men who are around. The tip-off on their speed is the frequency that fielders get knocked on their butts on double plays. I rarely had to jump over the runner sliding into second to break up the play. Now spikes are always up and waving in the fielders' face."

Joe Reichler, the historian in Commissioner Bowie Kuhn's office, says there is an obvious reason for the improvement in fielding: "Performers in all sports are better athletes than the people who preceded them and they're getting better coaching. Years ago, independently-owned minor-league clubs concentrated on developing young pitchers for sale to the majors at fancy prices. The managers didn't have time or assistants to give attention to other aspects of the game. Practically all teams in the minors now are part of big-league farm systems and the parent clubs have staffs of specialists who tour the organization teaching kids the fundamentals of the trade at all positions."

As a result, a certain rather endearing breed of ballplayer has vanished, the man who could make every ball hit to him a drama, every ball thrown by him an exercise in uncertainty.

Not so long ago, a spot in the lineup would invariably be found for that inept fielder who could hit. Teams since have learned they cannot afford the luxury of a man who gives away more runs than he knocks in. American League teams can use such players as designated hitters and National League teams can use them as pinch-hitters. But,

perhaps unfortunately, we are now spared sights such as that of one Smead Jolley attempting to survive a batted ball.

Jolley, an outfielder, joined the Boston Red Sox in 1933. He brought with him a four-year major-league batting average of .305 and a reputation as probably the worst fielder in baseball, but it was assumed that his transgressions on defense would be minimized by the short left-field wall in Fenway Park. Indeed, he did not have much area to cover out in Boston's left field, but the ground rose in a gentle incline toward that wall and relays of coaches were needed to school Smead Jolley in the gentle art of running up the hill.



Tinkers-to-Evers-to-Chance (top to bottom), one at a time or all together, couldn't match Bobby Grich's grace (left), or even Bobby Grich's mustache.

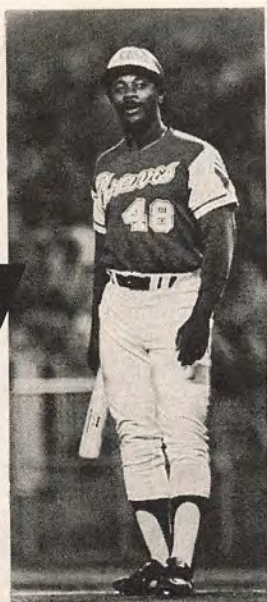
Eventually, he insisted he had the hang of it and soon after that, during a game, a soft fly was wafted out to him. Jolley lumbered up the incline only to discover he had misjudged the ball. He started down the slope, fell flat on his face and the ball dropped in front of him for a triple. Jolley stalked off the field and confronted his convulsed colleagues in the dugout.

"A bunch of wise guys," he said, bitterly. "You learned me how to go up the hill, but nobody showed me how to come down."



Ralph Garr, Bitter Batting Champion

BY PAT CONROY



As Ralph Garr sat in front of his locker after the next-to-last game of the 1974 baseball season, a game in which he had gone three for five and raised his league-leading average to .353, a sportswriter, en route to the obligatory half-circle surrounding Henry Aaron, took a detour past Garr. "How does it feel to be the National League batting champ, Ralph?" said the writer.

Garr replied without a scintilla of expression, "I ain't won it yet." Then he glanced toward the floor and, still without expression, added, "But I got a pretty good chance."

Ralph did have a pretty good chance. There was still one game left and relentless enemies such as Richie Zisk of Pittsburgh and Steve Garvey of Los Angeles were still giving chase. If Ralph went zero for 40 in the last game of the season and Zisk went 35 for 37, Ralph would not win the batting title.

But Ralph Garr had been denied honors before, and he was content to wait until the last pitch of the

season before celebrating his ascension to the batting throne. For three years he had been a pretender to that throne and the time for savoring was not yet upon him.

In 1971, his first full year in the majors, Garr hit .343, a figure celestial enough to lead almost any league in any year except that one. That was the year Joe Torre became a creature born on Krypton, dressed in a telephone booth, and hit a glowing, otherworldly .363. In his next year, Ralph hit .325 and finished second to Billy Williams' .333. The third year Ralph dropped to .299, his first visitation to the sere lowlands of .200, a season that was to plague him during contract time when Eddie Robinson, the general manager of the Braves, called it "a terrible year," even though Garr stole 35 bases, had 200 hits, and hit .343 after the All-Star break.

It is a common Atlanta sport to talk about Garr's weaknesses as a ballplayer instead of his strengths. One can collect rabid cantos lamenting his inefficiency as an out-

fielder or his mental lapses as a base runner. His name is frequently invoked whenever rumors sail aloft about Braves about to be offered up for trading bait. The logic of trading a man who in his four years as a major-leaguer has averaged over 200 hits, over 29 stolen bases, over 90 runs scored, while batting over .320, may escape most fans who engage in cerebral speculation about the sanity of the Braves front office. When Garr did not collect a single hit in his first 16 attempts of the 1974 season, the trade talk was airborne immediately, wafting secretly throughout the stadium and into the pressbox, like a frisbee thrown from unseen hands. Then Ralph settled down to be the best hitter in the league and the trade talk was forgotten by all. All except Ralph Garr.

On the last day of last season, Ralph Garr sat among the boxes and crates of his Southwest Atlanta apartment, his family primed for a rapid departure for their new home in Houston, Texas. He began to talk about himself and the game which has brought him through Grambling College and to the threshold of fame. He started slowly, for Ralph has been stung by sportswriters more than once. In a strong Louisiana idiom, he quotes Henry Aaron, whom Ralph reveres as he would the Word made flesh: "Like Hank always told me, 'Watch them sportswriters, 'cause they can mess you up so bad.' They can make you or break you, you know. Like the sportswriters are makin' Reggie Jackson everything in the world and he's batting ninety points less than Ralph Garr. But I don't want no bad rep. They can give you a rep and you don't even have to earn it. I thought to myself sometime: Why should I even talk to sportswriters? They don't even buy their tickets to get into a ballgame."

Hanging above the fireplace is a plaque with one of Ralph's bats attached, designating him as the batting champion of the winter league

Ralph Garr

CONTINUED

in the Dominican Republic. In the kitchen, a shiny blue-gold tapestry of the Last Supper is hung over the breakfast table. The tapestry is common at roadside stands along southern highways and is a best seller on Georgia backroads, rivaling even the brightest chenille bedspreads. "God has been, as far as I'm concerned, the best thing in my life, 'cause my mother and father raised me up like this. My mamma always tell me the same thing all the time. I'm very close to my mamma. She breast-fed me till I was six years old and I was always a mamma's boy. See, my mother's a religious person and you know just about ninety-nine or one hundred per cent of all black people are very religious, you know, 'cause this was the way we was raised and we really didn't have nothin' else to turn to hardly. When you have a hard time, you got to have somebody to go to."

Ralph Garr has the face of a mustachioed Tinkerbell and his smile is bright, but cautious. He is five-foot-eleven, but looks much smaller. He is thick like a weight lifter, a fullback at a small college, or a pulling guard. There is a feral definition to his muscles and though he weighs 197 pounds, an excess calorie would stick out on him like a carbuncle. His eyes are open, innocent, but they ask hard questions. He has the look about him of a country boy who has been abused by the city just one too many times. Over and over again, he returns to the topic of Henry Aaron. "Henry don't believe in pattern after others. He tell you, whatever God gave you, you take it and use it to your best and you be successful in your way

and he use what he got to his best to be successful in his way and all of us can be happy. See, I try to copy Hank. Hank has been the most humble ballplayer that ever live. He help me more than any other person. And Hank is fun. Fun! Like the time we all get together and Hank gives Dusty Baker a kidney pill and told him it was a vitamin. It was nothin' but a pill to turn your urine red, to flush you out. Well, Dusty go to the bathroom and it looks like he peein' blood. That kid thought he was dyin'. He came out of there and say, 'I got to get me a doctor, man. There's something bad wrong with me.' I like to die laughing when he did that. Then, one time Hank he gets up some kind of warrant out for me from some girl sayin' that she was pregnant. They had a real policeman deliver that thing to me at my locker. No one said nothin'. That room was dead quiet. That like to scared me to death. Sweat was poppin' out all over me big as my thumbnail. I was just a-tremblin' and I said, 'Gee whiz,' till I look over and see Henry really bustin' a gut he was laughing so hard. But that's the way Hank is. He cuts up sometime and he gives serious advice sometime."

As he speaks, Ralph rubs his right knee. He had missed over two weeks' playing time at the closing part of the season because of the knee. Fans and sportswriters hinted at the possibility that nothing was wrong with the knee, that he was trying to protect his average by simply not playing. Athletes in any sport will tell you of little secret things in the knee that, once activated, can end your base-stealing days forever. To lead the majors in hitting, it helps to leave the batter's box in a blur, to sprint toward first with Olympian speed, and to beat out the humble taps nicked in the infield that do as much to inflate a batting average as triples over the centerfielder's head. Explaining the knee, Ralph says, "I had a little tear in my tendon. I tried to play on it, but it

swole up real big. And then I wait a little while and I take batting practice and it swell up again. And I took a shot in it and it swell up after that. But I hear 'em talk. I hear what they say. That Ralph Garr is tryin' to back into the battin' title. So I don't pay it no mind. I just wait until the knee tells me it's okay. My mamma called me up from Ruston, Louisiana, when I first hurt the knee and say, 'Son, put some red clay and vinegar on that knee and it'll take care of the swelling.' When I was in the minor league, I used to do that. Now most people think those ol' folks is crazy with their ways and all, but that swellin' used to go down. Up here, I listen to the doctor and the trainer and they'd bust a gut if I asked 'em to put on red clay and vinegar. But my knee stayed puffy with all them shots and junk."

There is more of Ruston, La., in Ralph Garr than stories of his mama. The man speaks in an easy southern idiom that evokes shimmering visions of gumbo and collards, crawdads and hominy, and the long deathless summer afternoon of a backwater south afflicted with a terminal illness that not even red clay and vinegar can cure. He wants to do commercials in the off season and one knows instinctively there are things Ralph could sell as well as anyone: Pork sausage, Jeeps with four-wheel drive, Happy Jack's Mange Cure, and converted rice. Ad men would probably decide he could not sell beluga caviar, Eldorados or tickets to Ingmar Bergman movies, although the element of surprise has moved more than one aristocratic product. The size of his voice ranges from catatonic to manic. When he gets excited or upset, usually when he is discussing his salary or his relationship with the Braves, his voice is high pitched and somewhat out of control. But when he is reflective or choosing his words with caution or becomes aware that what he says may see the light of print, his voice slows as though someone had changed the speed of a record from

**"Let's straighten
it out with a
Long Distance
call."**



SOMETIMES LETTERS JUST DON'T DO IT.



Ralph Garr

CONTINUED

78 to 33-1/3. But there are two subjects on which Ralph Garr spills over and talks so quickly that his nickname "Roadrunner" seems as applicable to his tongue as to his feet. He cannot contain himself whenever he speaks of his relationship with the Atlanta Braves or hitting a baseball in the major leagues. Whenever these two topics arise, Ralph Garr explodes with opinion.

"Now take the Atlanta Braves front office," he says, standing and pacing the room. "I make \$60,000 a year now. That .299 year I had, well, Eddie Robinson just considered that the worst year in the world. So he gave me a \$5,000 raise after I get him 200 hits. He know I have a wife and a family and he know I'm the sole support of my mamma and daddy and he know I'm building a home in Houston. I keep askin', 'What do you want from me? What do you want?' If you want .300 I'll give you .300. And I'll try to hit 400. I say, 'Do you want me to lead the league?' Everybody say, 'Ralph Garr can lead the league.' But it ain't that easy. Do you know how many great ballplayers are in the National League? Anybody can have a fluke year and beat ya. Say like Joe Torre hit .363, he ain't gonna do that no more as long as he live." Here Ralph pauses and takes a breath, slows down as his fury towards the Braves subsides. "You see," he says softly, "I really don't know what to say 'cause the Atlanta fans are good to me. I got a letter the other day that was some kind of nice. Some kind of nice. It made me feel so good. From an old man. About forty years old. Old people seem to re-

late to me. I like to help old people. Now I ain't gonna get no name or no bad reputation. That's my main objective. I don't want to be no big controversial person for the Braves because I don't do nothin' for the Braves except help 'em win. Now my mamma, she always on the Braves side. My mother told me that no matter what the Braves did to me they was never wrong. My mamma say, 'Be patient son. Everything will be all right and God knows best.' And my wife is the same way. My wife used to tell me, 'Don't try to go so fast. You know, take your time.' But she set around and read in the paper and listened to what the radio said and now she is completely against the Braves. The radio man for the Braves about had my wife cryin', he talked about me so bad. Stuff like, 'He swing like he swinging a broom at flies' and stuff like this. He sets me on fire. But next year they gonna have to pay to get Ralph Garr's skill. If you the best in anything, you paid the best salary. So they gonna pay me as the best man. I think I'm the best singles hitter in baseball now, not barrin' anybody. My goal next year is to make a hundred and something thousand dollars. I got to make more than a hundred thousand dollars just to be satisfied with myself, 'cause I done gave so much. I done got my time in the big leagues and I didn't want 'em to say I got too much too fast. I can't do more than what I already done. I'm gonna go in and lay the stats on 'em."

The stats Garr would lay on the Braves are an iced-down testament to the consistency of his hitting. The stats prove that Garr is one of the hardest men to keep off base in the game today. He entered the 1974 season with the highest lifetime average of any active big leaguer. There is no science to Ralph Garr's hitting, no purity, no classicism. His is a pseudoscience where the strike zone is an imaginary frontier without precise boundaries, like the geographical measurements of limbo or the

exact latitude of the elephant burial ground. There is no human way to pitch to Ralph Garr since he has been known to swing at anything. He has swung at fast balls in the dirt, sliders over his head, and geese flying south for the winter. His strike zone is an arbitrary area just below Wilt Chamberlain's nose hair and somewhere an inch or two above the Gerber baby's Achilles tendon.

Henry Aaron has said that Ralph Garr has the best chance of any active baseball player to hit .400. But Ralph disagrees. "Man, a guy to hit .400 is gonna have to walk a lot," he says. "See, I don't miss no balls when I swing. The reason I don't walk is because I can hit. If I swing at a ball twice, I'm gonna hit it. Like, I know a batter in the league that walks a hundred times a year, but he'll swing at three good pitches and foul 'em back. You throw me three balls in reachin' distance and I ain't gonna foul 'em back. I'm gonna hit 'em fair somewhere. A lot of boys foul 'em straight back or swing right through 'em. I don't do that. I go to hit the ball. Now I could go up there and wait and watch and wait and look and watch and wait for pitches and walk, but you *know* if I swing the bat I'm gonna hit. I can hit is the reason I don't walk. The only time I strike out is on bad balls. You can't mostly throw a ball where I can hit it and strike me out. If I was teachin' a young boy hittin' now, I'd say, 'Don't do nothin' I do. Just do what I say.' Don't be afraid is the main thing I teach a kid 'cause you can't be afraid of the ball and hit. Just look for the ball, watch the ball, and try to watch the bat hit the ball."

Ralph stands, swinging an imaginary bat, his eyes fixed on a phantom ball. "Go out here to get it. Or up here to get it. Or down here to get it," he says taking healthy cuts at very bad pitches. "Pick up the ball as soon as possible. Don't pay no mind to the windup and all that junk. Pick the ball up, then get it. See, I do everything wrong 'cept



hit. I bails out, I swing at any pitches, and I don't wait for no good pitch to hit. When it's a good pitcher out on the mound, I don't like him to get two strikes on me, 'cause then he gives me his best smoke. So I try to hit the ball as soon as I can. Hit and run.

"You see," he says, sitting down on the couch, but still clutching an invisible bat, "I'll always get my hits. I'll get my hits. I don't really have no mathematical way of hitting or anything like that. Everybody think it so easy for me to hit and they're wrong. I work as hard as any of them to hit, but hittin' is somethin' you can't really do a whole lot of thinkin' on. Hittin' is just a job you go and do. I get plenty mad a lot. And a guy say, 'Well you hittin' .300 and I'm hit-

tin' .210, what you gettin' mad about?' But that's not the point and they can hit more if they concentrate more. A lots of 'em accepts defeat of being a .200 hitter. Like I didn't accept hittin' .299. If I can't hit more than .299, I'm gonna pack my stuff and go on home anyway. Now with the Lord willin' and if nothin' don't happen it makes me feel good to be the number one hitter in the National League where the strongest hitters in baseball play. Where I'm competin' against singles hitters like Pete Rose who makes \$160,000 a year. You know, everywhere I been I hit. I never tell anybody this or brag on it, but I will say if this was the Masonic League or any league, I'd get my hits. Put me in any league and I'll get my hits."

As long as Ralph Garr keeps pounding out hits and scoring runs, the jokes about his fielding can't hurt him.

That night Ralph Garr went two for five against the Cincinnati Reds and ended the season with a .353 average. The mayhem around his locker was the overflow of reporters crowding around Henry Aaron, who was whispering veiled hints that he was as unhappy with the Atlanta Braves front office as Ralph Garr. Not a single reporter stopped to interview the leading hitter in the National League. And a few months later, Henry Aaron was moving into a new home in Milwaukee, and Ralph Garr was going into arbitration, trying to get the Atlanta Braves to pay him the money he felt the best hitter in the National League deserved. ■

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There's No Tomorrow: LANCE RENTZEL AT SUPER BOWL 9



It was Thursday morning, Super Sunday minus III. The phone rang for almost a full minute before I could answer, still half-asleep.

"Good morning, Mr. Rentzel," the operator said cheerfully. "It's your eight o'clock wake-up call."

Oh, my head. One night as a member of the press and already I was hurting. I wobbled out of bed and headed for the bathroom, vowing never to drink tequila again.

The door to the adjoining room opened, and Fred Dryer entered, clad only in his underwear. His

round, boyishly-handsome face looked tired. Eyes red and watering, hair matted and stringy.

"I think someone shoved a head of hair in my mouth and set it on fire," Dryer said.

"That's what we get for staying out until five a.m.," I replied. "But it's good experience. All reporters have hangovers in the morning."

"Well, this reporter's going back to bed."

"No way," I said. "The press bus is leaving in 45 minutes and we've got to be on it. We have a deadline to make. You'll feel better after a

For Franco Harris (#32, left) and his coach, Chuck Noll, there was no tomorrow: It would just be Super Sunday plus I.

hot shower." Dryer picked up a bottle of Excedrin and walked out.

I was dressed by the time room service arrived. I signed the check and took the tray from the waiter. As I set it down on the table, I paused in front of the mirror to check out my wardrobe: Blue pinstriped zoot suit set off by black-and-white wingtipped shoes, a florid bow tie and a wide brim hat with an orange press pass in the band.

Dryer came in. "How do I look,

SUPER BOWL

CONTINUED

chief?" He was decked out in a brown tweed suit with a mismatched

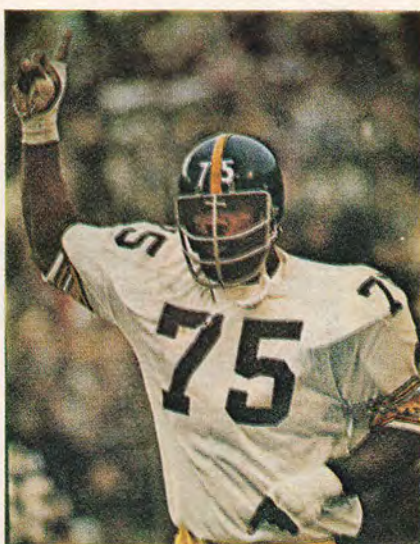
vest, brown-and-white brogans and a faded green cap. A pack of Lucky

Strikes stuck out of his coat pocket.

"Not bad, not bad," I said. "But your suit doesn't look wrinkled enough."

"No problem. I'll just sit on my

Lance Rentzel and Fred Dryer, in their "Front Page" get-ups, wanted the whole truth—from the stars and the faceless.



coat while we eat breakfast."

Our accessories were laid out on the bed: An ancient Underwood typewriter, a 1920s Speed Graphic camera, notepads, pencils. We were

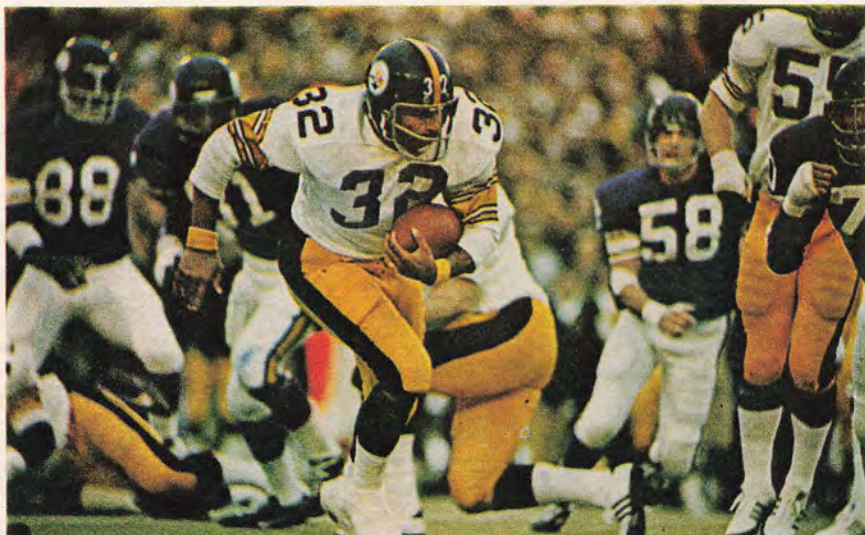
Franco Harris was the MVP in Super Bowl IX, but a stripper who streaked at half-time received a number of votes.

ready to cover Super Bowl IX.

The Pittsburgh Steelers were quartered at the Fontainebleau Hotel, a safe ten-minute ride or more from the heart of New Orleans, if it has one. The main ballroom at the Fontainebleau was

filled with sportswriters, munching on runny eggs and limp bacon, waiting for the daily press conference with Pittsburgh's head coach, Chuck Noll. Dryer and I sat down at a table in the back.

Then came the questions: What about the 14-man huddle? What





SUPER BOWL

CONTINUED

Howard Cosell took time out from his celebrity friends to worry about whether there really was freedom of the press, while football players answered the same questions, over & over & over.

will you have to do to win Sunday? How does it feel to be in the Super Bowl? Is Terry Bradshaw really that dumb? How do your receivers compare to Minnesota's?

The same questions for the fourth day in a row. Noll returned the favor, giving the same answers. No one seemed to care, except Dick Young of the New York *Daily News*, who asked a three-part question on AstroTurf.

After about 15 minutes, we got caught up in the excitement of the occasion. Dryer raised his hand; Noll acknowledged him.

"Cubby O'Switzer of the *Daily Steamer*," Dryer called out. "Do you think the zone defense is here to stay, and if not, where do you think it's going?"

It must have sounded like all the other questions. Nobody laughed; Noll gave us a detailed explanation of the zone defense; Dryer took notes, feverishly.

"However," Noll concluded, "we don't use the zone exclusively, since you have to play all four quarters."

I told Dryer to write that down.

When the session with Noll

ended, a photographer from UPI asked us if we'd like to interview Franco Harris.

"That's what we're here for," I said. "The whole truth, and nothing but the truth." We picked up our things and rushed outside.

Franco Harris was sitting at a table by the swimming pool. We introduced ourselves and sat down. Dryer started taking pictures with the Speed Graphic. I set my dusty typewriter in front of me.

Harris seemed a little perplexed.

"Don't worry about a thing," I said. "All we want is the facts. And if we don't like your answers, we'll make some up."

A smile spread across Harris' dark handsome face. Then we flooded him with stupid questions. Harris got right into the spirit of things, filling his answers with clichés. Dryer continued to take pictures, while I pounded out the story on my trusty Underwood. It wasn't long before we were surrounded by a large group of reporters. Flashbulbs popped, TV cameras rolled. Everyone was having a good time.

Dryer asked the last question.

"Does football teach you the game of life?"

"No, I think life teaches you the game of football," Harris replied.

A paunchy, balding man walked up to the table. He was wearing rumpled clothes and a stern look.

"You're needed inside, Franco," he said. Harris shook hands with us and left.

"I'm Jack Hand, the public relations director for the AFC," the man said. "Do you gentlemen have credentials?"

"Sure." I pointed to the press pin on my lapel.

Hand shook his head. "Anyone can get one of those. Do you have any proof that you're accredited members of the press?"

"Allow me to introduce myself," I said, handing him one of my business cards. "My name is Scoops Brannigan. That's B as in baptize, R as in Republican, A as in . . ."

"I know who you are," Hand snapped, "and I think it's wrong of you to bust in on this affair. You're drawing attention away from the players."

"We're just having some fun,"



We seemed to agree on everything that day. How we didn't want a wedding for hundreds. That my future wouldn't be with my father's company. Why our house in the country will be a tent and some sleeping bags.



Then we celebrated the years to come with an engagement ring.
Because there's room in everyone's life for a little tradition.

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SUPER BOWL

CONTINUED

Dryer explained to him.

"We're not here to have fun," Hand said, and walked off.

Holy crapes! We had our first scoop!

"I guess he doesn't understand that we're experienced reporters," Dryer said. "We've never paid for anything in our lives."

Some of the writers, obviously, *were* having fun. They crowded around us, laughing, smiling, even interviewing us.

It was almost noon, time for the Minnesota Vikings' press luncheon to begin. I was in the press lounge of the Hilton Inn, slamming down Bloody Marys to show everybody I was one of the boys.

Fred Dryer walked up to me. "Maybe it'd be better if we left."

"What happened?"

"When I tried to go into the ballroom, a league official blocked my way and said, 'Press only.' If I've got to force my way in, I'd rather forget about the whole thing. I don't want to cause any resentment."

Dryer had a good point. Neither of us had anticipated the uproar we were causing. We thought our outfits and our gear would make a great sight gag, worth a few laughs, and then be forgotten. No way. All of a sudden, we had become the top controversy at the Super Bowl. Sure, we were making fun of the press—but we were making fun of ourselves, too. We were the ones in the silly get-ups.

"You're probably right," I said to Dryer. "Let's go."

Morris Siegel, the veteran columnist of the *Washington Star-News*, was standing nearby.

"You shouldn't leave," he said.

Dryer stopped and turned around. "We don't want to make any enemies."

"Well, you've already made a few," Siegel replied. "But you've made a lot of friends, too. Most of

us can laugh at ourselves."

"Maybe we should quit while we're ahead," Dryer said.

Siegel shook his head. "Listen, for nine years in a row we've been asking the same tired questions and getting the same tired answers. It's boring as hell. Everyone I've talked with says you two were a long-overdue relief."

Dryer and I were still undecided.

"And one more thing," Siegel went on. "Regardless of what Jack Hand and some of the others may think, you're on assignment for a magazine. If you don't go in and cover the luncheon, no one will think you're serious."

"You're right!" Dryer headed for the door. "Besides, the eats are free!"

Siegel and I followed him inside. We went through the buffet line and sat down at a table in the corner.

Jim Heffernan walked up to the podium. The NFC public relations man has a slender frame and bright red hair, meticulously combed. He looks like he's never had a tan.

"Two members of another football team are here and they are accredited for the Super Bowl," Heffernan announced. "These players are welcome to conduct interviews, but if anyone wants to talk with them, would they do so outside this room? We ask for that courtesy."

He then asked which Minnesota players would be needed for interviews. Someone—not at our table—yelled out, "Dryer and Rentzel."

Heffernan stared straight ahead. "Thank you," he said sarcastically.

Soon afterwards, Minnesota coach Bud Grant met the press. The question-and-answer session lasted only a few minutes. No one seemed to care, especially Grant.

"If I wasn't eating, I'd have fallen asleep," Dryer said.

Then the players came in. Jim Marshall walked up to our table.

"You guys are too much," the

defensive end laughed, eyeing our outfits. "Is this a yes-and-no thing?"

"Yes," I said.

"No," Dryer said.

"Now, Jim, off the record," I began, "is this just another game?"

"On, ti si cht etamitlu emag," said Marshall.

"That's easy for you to say," Dryer said.

Marshall explained that he was talking backwards.

I took out my notepad and thumbed through the pages. "I have a few questions I'd like to ask. First of all, is confidence important? And if so, why?"

By this time, our table was surrounded by reporters, most of them hastily scribbling notes.

I went on. "Does skull size indicate IQ? And if so, would you mind telling us how big your helmet is?"

Jim Heffernan forced his way through the crowd. His face was flushed with emotion.

"You two are making a damned shambles of this Q-and-A session," he screamed, "and I don't appreciate it! You've got this whole place in an uproar!"

Heffernan stopped abruptly and stalked off, muttering to himself. He seemed to realize that he was losing his control. Smiles vanished, shoulders slumped.

"The press is depressed," Dryer mumbled. "You can't laugh at the Super Bowl."

That journalistic lesson was coming through to us—very clearly.

I reached for my typewriter. "Let's go," I said.

"Hey, wait a second," one of the writers said. "You weren't doing anything wrong. You got a right to ask your questions."

I shook my head. "I think we've worn out our welcome. No use pushing it. See you later."

We were on our way out when the news reached us: Fran Tarkenton wouldn't start his daily interview until we were there.

"Holy crapes, what a break!" Dryer said. We rushed back inside. When Tarkenton saw us coming, he cleared out two seats next to him.

"Ya big palooka," I said, open-

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SUPER BOWL

CONTINUED

ing up my dusty, trusty typewriter, "you're a sight for sore eyes." Dryer began to take pictures of the baby-faced quarterback, who was posing in a floppy suede hat. Most of the people in the room now crowded around our table.

Dryer set the camera down and took out his note pad. "All right, Fran, cut the stailin'. Let's have your story."

"First, I'd like to say that the Super Bowl is the ultimate game. It's the kind of game that you look forward to playing in when you're a kid. I'm so happy for the chance to be here, so happy to have the opportunity to kick Joe Greene's ass."

"Take this down, Cubby. Tarkenton threatens Mean Joe Greene! Says New Orleans isn't big enough for both of them!"

"Got it, Chief!"

I leaned forward, suddenly serious. "Is it true that Bud Grant has been dead since last Friday? And if so, why?"

Tarkenton just sat there, laughing.

"For cryin' out loud," I said, shaking my head, "that's not a good answer. Rewrite that, Cubby."

Dryer jotted down a couple of lines and then turned back to his list of questions. "Is there any truth to the rumor that the Viking management is planning to breed Alan Page? And if so, who will get the pick of the litter?"

I looked around to see what Heffernan was doing. He was standing next to the podium, shaking his head in disgust.

Dryer loosened his tie and unbuttoned his collar. "Fran, one of your teammates had this to say about the Super Bowl: 'There's no tomorrow.' Is there no tomorrow? And if so, will you be disappointed when you wake up Monday morning?"

"Gentlemen," Heffernan announced, "the first bus will be leaving for press headquarters in fifteen

minutes." No one stood up.

"Will the Vikings be up for the game?" I asked.

Tarkenton thought about it for a moment, stroking his chin. "Well, the game doesn't start until two o'clock, so I imagine we will be."

Dryer took the pack of Lucky Strikes out of his pocket and lit one.

"Now, if you can't run, will you pass?" Dryer inhaled cautiously so he wouldn't choke. "If you can't pass, will you run? And if you can't run or pass, will you punt on first down?"

"We'll run some, pass some, kick some, scratch, bite, lie, cheat. . . ."

I looked at Tarkenton intently. "Could you be more general, please?"

Then I popped my last question. "Fran, is it true that you can't win the big ones? And if so, why?"

"Yes, it's true. I just don't have the dedication, the discipline it takes, to win the big games. . . ."

"Thank you very much," I interrupted. "Did you get that, Cubby?"

"You betcha," he said, looking at his notes. "Tarkenton has no dedication. He is not a religious man."

I motioned for Dryer to take my seat. "This is your big chance, my boy. I'm going to let *you* write the story." There was a look of disbelief on his face.

"Come on, snap into it," I urged. "Don't sit there like a frozen robin! Grab that machine."

Dryer began to type furiously. I watched over his shoulder.

"Give 'em the works, Cubby! We ain't got a minute to lose! This ain't a newspaper story—it's a career! Why, they'll be naming streets after you! You'll run this rube town!"

I noticed a house phone on the wall. I rushed over and picked up the receiver. "Gimme rewrite. . . . Hello, Al? This is Brannigan. Listen, I want you to rip out the front page. I got the whole story on Tarkenton and it's a pip! Cubby's writ-

ing the lead right now. . . . Take all those Miss Universe pictures off page two. . . . Yes, spike it! . . . No! Leave the raccoon story alone—that's human interest! . . . We'll be there as soon as possible!"

Jim Heffernan looked on helplessly, his head in his hands.

It was Saturday night, Super Sunday minus I. Fred Dryer and I were edging our way through the sea of people on Bourbon Street. The whole French Quarter looked like one gigantic cocktail party. Dancing, singing, staggering, shouting—and plenty of drinking. The trash in the gutters was almost knee-deep in some places. Beer cans, broken hurricane glasses, hot-dog wrappers. The atmosphere was a blend of old elegance and new morality. House of the Rising Sun, swingers clubs, Court of the Two Sisters, strip joints. Gift shops displayed cheap lingerie and t-shirts that read: "I WAS BORN HORNY."

Madness, madness. In the same neighborhood the night before, a woman shot a man five times, claiming self-defense. The dead man wasn't carrying a gun.

Now football fans ruled the streets. The Steeler fans were decked out in black and gold; many of them wore mining helmets with revolving red lights on top. The Viking fans' color scheme was purple and gold; their helmets were topped by plastic horns.

Dryer and I made our way inside the Old Absinthe House, unofficial Super Bowl press headquarters. As usual, the Absinthe was crammed with all kinds of people talking about the party they just came from and the one they were going to next.

There were two seats open in the far corner. We sat down and ordered a beer.

"Well, if it isn't Scoops and Cubby." I recognized the unmistakable nasal twang of Howard Cosell. He was standing nearby, in the midst of such fellow celebrities as Reggie Jackson and Frank Gifford.

Cosell walked over to us. "Why aren't you two bastions of journal-

The most natural thing on two feet.



Sprout No. 2



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Sprout No. 3 and Sprout No. 1

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SUPER BOWL

CONTINUED

ism wearing your outfits?" he asked.

"We gave them to Jack Hand and Jim Heffernan," Dryer said. "They still dress that way."

"Actually, we didn't want to attract any more attention," I said.

Larry Fox, the president of the Football Writers Association, had already complained to Pete Rozelle about our actions. Fortunately, the other directors of the FWA took up for us, and Fox was forced to back down. Although Rozelle seemed amused by the whole thing, we didn't want to press the issue; our uniforms were put away for good.

"I'm glad to hear we still have freedom of the press," said Cosell.

Our beers were served to us in chilled mugs. Dryer flipped out a ten and asked for \$2 in change. The bartender gave him eight quarters. Dryer picked up the money and

started towards the juke box. He returned about 15 minutes later, accompanied by one of his former teammates, an ex-safety for the Giants. The safety was small, slow. Yet he somehow managed to stay in the league for 12 years.

They were talking about Doug Atkins, the defensive end who terrorized NFL quarterbacks in the '50s and '60s.

"Freddy, you have no idea how strong big Doug is," the safety remarked. "You're a big guy, a real big guy, but if big Doug was here, you know what he'd do if he wanted to?"

"What?"

"He'd take his hands and . . . You're a big guy, Freddy, I know your hands are big, but do you know how big his hands are?"

"How big?"

"He could pick up a case of beer in one hand, that's how big his hands are."

"Really?" Dryer said.

"If he wanted to, he could squash you into the ground, and you'd be about four feet tall, all folded up like an accordion. You know how big his arms are?"

"How big?"

The safety formed a large circle with his hands. Dryer looked over at me and smiled.

"Don't laugh, his arms are that big. And you can't believe how big his legs are. They're really big. The man is six-eight and 280, not a pound of fat on him, even now . . . Big Doug was the greatest. I've seen him polish off three fifths of Wild Turkey in one sitting. He used to come over to my house—we were like brothers, you know. . . ."

"Say, you know Lance, don't you?" Dryer said, gesturing towards me.

"Do I know Lance?" The safety shook my hand. "Hell yes. I used to cover him when he was playing

for Dallas. I'd cheat over to his side just before the snap, and I'd stare him in the eye and yell out, 'You son-of-a-bitch, if you run that post, it'll be your ass!' And sure enough, Rentzel would come off that line blazing and cut to the post, Meredith would drop back and let loose with a 60-yard bomb, and I'd have to run with him step-for-step and knock the ball away at the last second. Right, big fella?" He slapped me on the back.

"Right," I said.

"Course that was a while ago," the safety went on. "I been outta the game almost five years."

Dryer sagged visibly. He'd had it. "Listen, I have to split. All of a sudden I feel like a TV that's been on all night."

The safety followed us to the door. He shook my hand, patted Dryer on the back and disappeared.

"Only one more day in this zoo," Dryer said.

It was late the next evening. Fred Dryer and I were sitting in a 747

Jumbo Jet, on its final approach into LA International Airport. The lights in the Southern California basin spread as far as the eye could see in either direction. The thousands of cars on the streets below looked like solid red and yellow ribbons, stretching for miles on end.

Super Sunday. We spent most of the day freezing our ass off in the press box of creaking Tulane Stadium. It was cold, damp, windy; the chill factor hovered around ten degrees throughout the game. Pittsburgh won, 16-6. Franco Harris was the MVP, proving that life does prepare you for the game of football. Fran Tarkenton wanted to see us afterwards, but like true reporters, we wanted to hang around winners, so we remained in the Steelers' locker room.

The plane landed.

"It's great to be home," I said.

"Away from all that insanity," Dryer added.

We were in the National Airlines terminal a few minutes later, heading for the parking lot. A young

girl approached me. She was dressed like a pioneer, with her hair pulled back in a tight bun.

"Are you from this country?" she asked me.

"Where do I look like I'm from?"

"Well, I dunno, you seem so different, you see, so Continental . . . Anyway, you look like someone who'd be interested in Krishna Consciousness."

"What?"

"Krishna Consciousness." She handed me a book, called "SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM." The cover was full of bright colors, Oriental figures and flowers.

"It's a happy book, about the prehistory of the universe, the spiritual universe." She pointed to a violet sphere in the upper right corner of the cover. "This is the ultimate planet in the spiritual sky. It's called Galoka, and you can go there. And here are the other spiritual planets, called Vicantis, which means free from anxiety. . . ."

I gave her \$5. She took it and left free from anxiety. ■

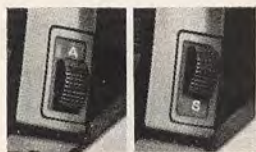
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At an amateur tournament luncheon in Texas when John Jacobs was 19 years old, somebody introduced a local golfer as one of the longest hitters in the world. Jacobs' California buddies jumped up and yelled, "Hey, we got a guy here." Before very long, the Texans were betting with both fists. Jacobs and the other fellow agreed to hit ten drives apiece, and the longest drive would be the winner. Everybody started for the door except Jacobs, who headed for the bar, telling the crowd to call him when it was his turn. When it was his turn, he went out into the hot sun, wobbling some, looked out at the other guy's longest drive and said, "Gimme a three-wood. I gotta get it airborne." He took one swing and connected and as the ball sailed out, John dropped the club, grabbed his beer and headed back for the clubhouse. He won by 40 yards.

Nine years later, at the 1973 St. Louis Open, John Jacobs was on the practice tee sailing drives out over a snow fence that was 300 yards away. On a dare, he pulled out a two-iron and hit one that rose up, went into the jetstream and landed in the top of a tree behind the fence. He gave the iron back to his caddie, and as he walked away he told the fans what they already

BY DAN GLEASON

**JOHN JACOBS IS #1 ON
THE PRO GOLF TOUR...
IN MONEY SPENT**

suspected: "Folks, I don't believe anybody's ever hit an iron that far before."

The previous year, Jacobs had put together his best season as a touring golf pro. He had finished 96th on the tour in money-winings with just under \$23,000. But in 1973, and again in 1974, he wasn't even among the top 100. He was lower than a rabbit, so obscure that if he wandered across your screen during a televised tournament, it had to be a technical error. For every golf fan who'd heard of John Jacobs, there had to be a million who'd heard of Arnold Palmer. Before I ever saw Jacobs play a round, I figured he was one of those big lugs who could just hit for show and couldn't make a two-foot putt. But a wise old caddie said I was wrong.

"He can putt and he can chip," the caddie said. "I don't guess he's got any weaknesses except for off the course. He could probably beat most of these hundred-thousand-dollar players if it was for their own money. It's a whole lot different playin' for your own cash. And to J.J., money don't mean nothin'—it's just little pieces of paper."

Indeed, I soon found out that while the \$100,000 players were busy planning their strategies for the Grand Slam, Jacobs was out sniffing the wind for the grand parties. He was a hard rider, a two-fisted gambler, a man who tested how fast the car could go and the life could be lived, who tumbled through *The Scene* and practiced wenching until he had raised it to an art. Like the fictional soldier-adventurer, the delightfully scandalous "Flashman" of George MacDonald Fraser, John Jacobs was more concerned with cutting a fine figure on parade than with the battle.

In the middle of today's recession, with a lot of big spenders holding back, it is reassuring to find a man who possesses the style of John Jacobs. Not only is he one of golf's biggest hitters and one of the world's fastest livers, but there is

a third component—his attitude toward security—that makes him particularly worth viewing in these nervous days. Several months ago, I sat in his car as Jacobs scorched a Southern California four-lane at 100 miles an hour. We had been talking about the golf tour's highest echelon—the 60 men who win the most money in a year and, thus, are automatically eligible to play in the major tournaments. Jacobs leaned back in his seat and said, "I don't want to be in the top sixty."

I know pros who've sweated and stayed awake nights thinking about being in the top 60 and not having to qualify for tournaments on Monday. I know pros who'd give their souls and ten years of their lives to be in the top 60. But Jacobs simply shrugged. "If you're in the top sixty," he said, "you just have to be a bunch of places and do a bunch of things."

The front end of the car started shaking and he let off the footpedal and eased it down under 90. His sidekick, John Nichols, was in the back trying to keep from spilling a gin-and- tonic he'd camouflaged in a Ronald McDonald glass. "This thing needs a tune-up," Nichols said.

Jacobs adjusted the rearview mirror. "Yeah, I'll take it in tomorrow and have it washed." Then he turned to me. "Look," he said, "if you run short on material and you have to make something up, it's okay. I'll understand."

It is not necessary to make up anything about John Jacobs—not even to satisfy the most avid fancier of colorful personalities. When he was 15 years old, for example, Jacobs made it to the National Junior Championship in Detroit. While the other kids were bunked in at the YMCA, sneaking puffs off cigarettes they'd smuggled in, dropping water balloons and thinking of ways to cheat the pinball machines, John Jacobs checked into a downtown Detroit hotel suite, got a fake I-D, rented a Cadillac convertible, bought a fifth of Scotch and picked up a 20-year-old girl.

When he was 19, in 1964, Jacobs went into the army and had it made, teaching golf to officers and their wives at Ft. Hood, Texas. Someone gave him a Cadillac to drive down to play in an amateur tournament in Mexico and, he says, "I figured, 'What the hell, I'm a real big man back at the base—I'll stay down here for an extra week.'" But on Jacobs' return, the general decided to teach him a lesson and told him he was going to a place called Viet Nam in southeast Asia. "I figured it was some kind of exotic island, like Hawaii, and I said, 'Great, I'll pack my swimming trunks.' And then I read where there were snakes over there that could kill you in thirty seconds, and that weekend eighty guys had been killed in Saigon—and that was just in bar fights."

Jacobs managed to survive Viet Nam, both the night life *and* the ambushes. He even survived an assignment as a forward-observer, an artillery scouting job with a life expectancy about equal to that of an ant on a Manhattan sidewalk during lunch hour. When he got back to the U.S., he turned pro, got his tour card at 23 and headed for the Big Time. A rich friend offered him \$7,000 extra to take along just to spend; Jacobs would never even have to pay it back. Jacobs said no, he had his own bankroll, but the man insisted. So Jacobs asked Nichols if he wanted to go along. They had John's bankroll, plus the \$7,000, and on top of that, Jacobs immediately began averaging \$1,200 a week in winnings on the tour. In less than three months, he and Nichols were flat broke and eating celery.

Then, as now, the problem was not Jacobs' game or swing, but his inattention to the practice and sacrifice necessary for consistency on the tour. "I'm usually sharp for a few weeks," says Jacobs, "and then my game gets sour out there. It might be different if I was married. But bachelor life on the tour gets you."

It also costs money. "I can squeeze by on the tour," says

JOHN JACOBS

CONTINUED

Jacobs, "for about fifty thousand a year." He used to sell shares of himself to backers; "I've had more sponsors than the Johnny Carson Show." But lately he's found the international golf market and can keep up not only his bankroll, but also his spirits by playing in London one week, Tokyo the next, Paris the week after, as opposed to, say, Endicott, N.Y. one week, Bettendorf, Iowa, the next week, and Robinson, Ill., the week after that. In 1974 he earned some big checks playing in Europe, and won about \$25,000 on the American tour. He picked up an additional \$20,000 playing television exhibitions in England and Japan and, with his long ball as a drawing card, opening driving ranges in Japan.

"I've decided," says Jacobs, "to get a little more serious about making money."

"Yeah," says Nichols, "John's thirty going on twenty-one. But that's a big improvement. He used to be twenty-nine going on eighteen."

Jacobs is concerned about making money for his sponsors, but his sponsors—which he has cut down to two now—are sportsmen and are less concerned with profit than sport. John's "Northern California" sponsor is Syl Enea, a very rich land developer who owns the Concord Inn, a country club near San Francisco; Enea, says Jacobs, "is

more like a dad than a sponsor." His "Southern California" sponsor is his close friend Ray Kawano, who owns a big produce company; Kawano is a calm, very personable man in his mid-30's who met Jacobs at Del Mar race track a few years ago.

Additionally, because Jacobs does cut such a fine parade figure, the Jantzen company sends him a steamer-trunk full of clothes at a time, 90 shirts at once, and his closet is full of expensive slacks and suits. Jacobs also has more than 150 pairs of street shoes, some of which he's never worn. He is a powerful man—big in the shoulders, strong in the legs—and, with his California beach-blond hair and fashionable costuming, does not have to search hard for temptations to which to yield. Last year, on a vow, he stopped partying for three days and stood third in the Bing Crosby tournament when rain cancelled the event after the third round. A reformed man, fresh with success, he went on to Phoenix. There, he shot a 76 in the first round, allowed two girls to escort him off the course, and several weeks went by before he was seen again on the tour.

"There isn't anybody on the tour with more talent and less motivation than John Jacobs," says Leonard Thompson, the pro from Bay Tree Golf Plantation, S.C., who himself won more than \$122,000 in 1974. "John is long and straight," says Thompson, "and he has a good putting touch and all the talent anybody could hope to have."

Former PGA champion Ray Floyd is even more lavish in his praise for Jacobs' putting and in his belief that "John has all the physical abilities it takes." And Rod Curl, who won \$120,000 last year, agrees that Jacobs has talent. But, says Curl, "There's a lot of 'if' there. Mickey Mantle might have been better than Ruth and Gehrig put together if he hadn't had bad knees—and maybe J.J. could rule the world if he had different goals and attitudes. And

maybe I could whip Muhammad Ali if I were seven-foot tall. But the thing is, Mickey Mantle did have bad knees and John's where he is in golf and I'm five-foot-five. Maybe John already has what he wants."

What John has, in golf, is a reputation as one of the two longest hitters in the game. The other is Jim Dent, a man to whom Jacobs concedes nothing. "If Jim Dent's manager, Mark McCormack, puts it in print that Jim is the longest hitter in the world, I'll sue him," says Jacobs. "What I want to do is bet Jim Dent a wheelbarrow full of cash on a one-on-one contest. I know I'm longer than Dent. And if he doesn't believe it, I'll get out the wheelbarrow."

When Jacobs was an amateur, he might very well have been the longest hitter in the world, hands down. He used to hit a low, screaming hook that would roll forever. But on the tour he cut back to get control. "A lot of times," he says, "you don't see Dent's long ball or my long ball because we're just trying to knock it down in the fairway."

Back in the Southern California amateurs, Curtis Sifford, now a touring pro, was putting out on a 400-yard hole. He heard a thump and a ball trickled up between his legs. He looked around to bawl out the guy who had hit his second shot onto the green. He looked back and saw no one. He looked back and back and back and still saw no one. He finally spotted a tiny figure 400 yards away on the tee. "Nobody had to tell me who it was," says Sifford. "I knew it had to be John Jacobs."

John Jacobs began playing golf when he was three years old. His father managed country clubs around Los Angeles and his older brother, Tommy Jacobs, was a golf prodigy who eventually became one of the stars of the pro tour in the 1960s. "Tommy taught me a lot about golf," says John, "but most of it I picked up by observation. I was such a wild kid that

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JOHN JACOBS

CONTINUED

most everybody was always trying to duck me, so I had to learn a lot of it on my own."

Through Tommy, who is ten years older, John met most of his sports contacts in Los Angeles while still a kid. Consequently, he has *always* had the best seats at all the football games and prize fights and the best tables at all of the best night clubs. "I've done everything I've ever wanted to do every day of my life since I was seventeen years old," says John.

The brothers are almost complete opposites. John is six-foot-three and 215 pounds; Tommy is five-foot-ten and 160. John is extravagantly free-spirited; Tommy is a mild-mannered man who believes in the work ethic and enjoys his current life as a club pro near San Diego. Nevertheless, the brothers are very close. Whenever the PGA has a complaint about something John has done, they call Tommy.

Periodically, Tommy has long talks with John, urging him to get serious about golf and to ease back on his pace. John listens respectfully, thanks him, thinks it over, and goes back to living the way he's always lived—recklessly, honestly, happily and with high regard for the generous gesture.

A tour caddie tells a story of getting \$300 from Jacobs for working his bags, even though they'd missed the cut, because Jacobs knew the caddie was broke. An assistant pro out at Tommy's club, Rancho La Costa, tells how John came home from one satellite tournament \$1,200 richer. He went out on one of his buying sprees, and the assistant rode along. At a clothing store, John said, "Hey, aren't you going

to buy any threads?" The assistant said no, he couldn't afford any. John peeled off a \$100 bill. "Pick out some nice colors."

John Nichols enjoys recounting how Jacobs always drove his Corvette 120 miles an hour, "one-two-oh, even to the grocery store." Jacobs himself happily remembers that he used to hit the night spots before he'd leave for the tour, and eventually would get somebody to drive him to the airport in the Corvette. He'd tell the person to keep the car and drive it, he'd be back in a month or two. Sometimes he didn't even know the driver's last name. "Nobody ever stole it," he shrugs.

One evening not long ago, Jacobs, Nichols and I were headed for a night spot in La Jolla, near John's home. La Jolla is a sartorial, leisure chunk of California in the San Diego area, full of jet-setters and surf-bunnies, the new-rich, the pool lappers, and more than ten per cent unemployment, much of which is purely by choice. There's legal nude sunbathing in La Jolla, a delicatessen that sells artichoke fritatta, another place where you can find a bottle of Chateau Lafite-Rothschild for \$325 and can get fresh caviar flown in direct from Iran.

While driving, Jacobs whipped out a gold, engraved lighter and lit a cigarette. "My friend Jim Hughes from Canada told me a long time ago never to go any way but first class." He had a dark thought. "Jesus—what if you died in a plane crash and your friends found your body in the coach section?"

We arrived at one of his favorite places, Bully's. It was crowded with people, most of whom knew Jacobs either personally or by reputation, especially the women. We took over a booth and ordered a liter of wine and started talking about the tour life. "When I'm in Florida," Jacobs said, "sometimes I get a suite at the Diplomat and do the coast up for a week or so. The Diplomat is between Miami and Lauderdale, which is strategic to the

program." His favorite tour stops, he said, are Hawaii—"for pure female volume;" Ft. Worth for the Colonial—"because they party big and the girls are in a contest to see who can wear the least amount of clothing to the golf course;" and Jacksonville—"because it's the only town where the girls find out where you're staying and call you."

Our waitress was Sondra Buffet, a friend of John's. "Somebody asked me the other night if John plays out of a club," she said. "I told them, 'Yes, the Playboy Club.'"

John raised his glass.

Later on, when the crowd began to trickle out, the talk grew serious. "You know," Jacobs said, "I might end up broke and staggering. But this is no time to think about it, and anyway . . . it's only life."

He got up to talk to the owner. "John's not gonna starve," Nichols said. "The women won't let him starve. There's a long line of them out at La Costa, divorcees and rich widows who'd scratch each other's eyes out to make him a kept man."

By one a.m., as the music picked up and we started on our third liter of wine, we were talking about friends and how good it was to be young and in Southern California. Somewhere, people were thinking about the future and building monuments to themselves. But not Jacobs.

One of his friends was saying, "You know, whenever you have a talent, the first thing somebody says these days is, 'You can sell that.' Or, 'Hey, you can make a load of money with it.' Why don't they say, 'You can have a lot of fun with it?' Anyhow, a thousand years from now, who'll really give a damn?"

It was a good question. Billions of years from now, after we've built driving ranges and franchise hamburger stands across the rusty deserts of Mars, all our monuments will turn into dust thinner than pool chalk, and our universe will disappear. And whatever or whoever's next won't likely care that there were men on the planet Earth who were responsible, much less re-

strained, or made a load of money and won a lot of athletic contests. So why not try to leave heavy tracks by taking a hard ride through life, making a big dent and enjoying the music?

As we were leaving Bully's, the bartender was closing down and washing the glasses. Jacobs tossed a \$50 bill out on the bar and said, "Is that gonna cover it?"

The bartender shook his head and said, "John, when are you going to start thinking about frugality?"

Jacobs' expression changed. He didn't say anything. And finally, he said, "I've been thinking about it for a long time now, more and more here lately. Frugality. But how did you know?"

I shrugged and Nichols shrugged back.

Outside in the parking lot, Jacobs had a quizzical look on his face. He shrugged and lit a cigarette and looked over at us. "*Frugality* is a three-year-old running up at Del Mar on Saturday. He's a long-shot, but if I thought the sonovabitch could get out of the gate, I'd put five grand on his nose." ■

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THE SPORT QUIZ!

ANSWERS

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1—c. 2—a. 3—Robinson-Robertson; Lucas-Russell; Washington-Walker. 4—a. 5—b. 6—True. 7—b. 8—b. 9—a. 10—c. 11—b. 12—c. 13—c. 14—Munson—Plum & Studstill; Morrall—Lucci & Dess; Lamonica—Flores & Powell. 15—a. 16—c.



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The L.A. Kings: Up From Serfdom

BY JON TRONTZ

For many decades, major-league professional hockey existed only in the upper right-hand quarter of the United States and the lower right-hand quarter of Canada. And the people knew that this was the way hockey was supposed to exist. If God had intended for hockey to be played in Southern California, he would have given the area at least a taste of ice.

When the National Hockey League expanded to the West Coast in 1967, and a team was installed in the suburbs of Los Angeles, surrounded by palm trees and not maple leaves, the NHL seemed to reinforce the theory that major-league hockey wasn't to be played in that area. The new team used sticks, pucks, masks and even six players to a side, but the resemblance to big-time professional hockey ended right there.

Now the Grand Design has changed. Pro Hockey, real, body-checking, goal-scoring, shot-stop-

ing hockey, has come to Southern California. The Los Angeles Kings, after a childhood of mediocrity, are winning hockey games, and not just occasionally. The Kings have an owner, Jack Kent Cooke, who's adamant about winning the Stanley Cup. They have a coach, Bob Pulford, who knows that his tenure depends on satisfying Jack Kent Cooke's hunger for victory. But best of all, they have Rogatien Vachon, a netminder as stingy with goals as Scrooge ever was with pounds and pence.

"We had gone through a drought, a dreadful drought, and at times it appeared like we would never get out," says Cooke, who owns, besides the Kings, the Los Angeles Lakers, the Forum where they both play, and 75 per cent of the Washington Redskins. "The Kings are my first love," he adds, "and to see them on the bottom for so long was sickening. I feel a little more secure now. Losing again would be like a wave of the Bubonic plague."

Jack Kent Cooke isn't easy to

work for. The six coaches he's hired in the eight-year life of the franchise are proof enough. He has been called irascible and egotistical, and that by his friends. But there's one thing even his enemies haven't called him: An absentee owner.

"The way I figure it is that since I own the team, I want to win that much more," says Cooke. "And to win I have to have people I can work with. Others have tried coaching here and have failed. But Pulford has been magnificent. The team's been magnificent, so far. What can I say about a team that was supposed to fall on its face and a coach who prevented it?"

When Pulford and general manager Jake Milford took charge of the team, the Kings' roster was cluttered with good hockey players who were getting older, and mediocre hockey players who weren't getting any better. Among the aging were key players like Bob Nevin, Frank St. Marseille and Terry Harper, all in their mid- to late-thirties. Among the mediocrities were defensemen Larry Brown

With Rogatien Vachon guarding the nets, the L.A. Kings have brought real big-league hockey to Southern California.

Kings

CONTINUED

and Bob Murdoch. Among the missing were the future draft picks that could infuse new blood. Cooke had already mortgaged off his future draft picks—for those veterans, for those mediocrities. Then came Pulford and Milford, facing only one choice: Trade—or stagnate.

First they acquired three young Rangers—Mike Murphy, Tommy Williams and Sheldon Kannegieser—and obtained another, Gene Carr, in a subsequent deal. Murphy, Carr and Williams combined to form the fast-skating “Off-Broadway Line.” The Kings’ new offensive thrust took pressure off their defense. Defensemen began to get self-confidence, the goaltenders (Vachon and Gary Edwards) began to get shutouts. Most important of all, though, Pulford integrated every element of his hockey club into a coherent system.

“The word *system* is a grossly misused term,” says Pulford. “Our system is really not any different from what the other clubs use. The difference is, we make our system *work*. The players have to believe in it. They have to be disciplined. These days, you take a school kid and tell him to go through the front door and he’ll say, ‘Why, the side door is closer.’ I can’t say, ‘You have to wear a shirt and tie, you have to stay away from the hotel bar.’ The players ask questions. They have to understand your *purpose*.”

Compared to Montreal’s Flying Frenchmen (whom the Kings have battled all season for first place in Division III), Los Angeles plays a dull and dogged brand of fundamental hockey. The defensemen don’t carry the puck, a la Orr, but stay glued to their positions; the puck is often thrown into the corners, where one forward will chase, while the other two will cover the

boards. When they backcheck, to save time, the forwards stop, turn around and skate, instead of circling. Their passing resembles a game of connect-the-dots—short yet consistent progressions up ice. In Pulford’s system, efficiency is more important than dramatic effect. Not surprisingly, that’s exactly how Bob Pulford played hockey for 16 years in the NHL—14 with Toronto and the final two with Los Angeles.

As a player, Pulford was a dependable, if unspectacular craftsman, who became one of the best defensive centers in history. As a coach, he is an intellectual, whose deep, monotonous voice, grayish hair and preference for tailored suits and vests reinforce a conservative image.

“As a coach, I try to go to the basic intellect of a player,” he says, between long drags on a cigarette. “I don’t believe there is such a thing as a miracle worker. It’s the mind. Without the right mental outlook, a player is not in the best physical condition.”

“The main difference between this year’s club and the past years’ is attitude. The attitude when I played here was, well, we lost and that’s that. So what? We accepted losing. Now, we react to a loss.”

Bob Pulford leapt into a snake-pit when he accepted Cooke’s two-year offer to coach just prior to the 1972-73 season. The club was disintegrating. Dissension stalked the locker room. Attendance was almost as low as the players’ spirits. And hovering in the background was Jack Kent Cooke.

“In dealing with Cooke, you see, you have to know all the answers,” says GM Jake Milford. “He wants to call all the shots. Sometimes, he calls me in and he rants about the club. It’s tough to take. But Pully has been able to handle him better than I can.”

“Before I took the job, I spent enough time with Cooke and he seemed to understand what had to be done,” says Pulford, who spent ten days studying George Allen, Cooke’s pro football coach, in an in-

formal seminar sponsored by the owner. “Cooke’s a demanding man, but he’s an intelligent man. I wasn’t apprehensive of him, but of myself. I didn’t know if I would be a decent coach. I knew the situation and I knew the players, but I was a little shaky on the inside. To be extremely blunt, I know I would have been blamed if things went wrong; everyone else was fired.”

“But I’ve never had any problems with Mr. Cooke,” he says. “In his own little way, he gets his words in. He lets you know he’s there.” Pausing, he adds, with the trace of a smile, “No great problems. Just a few little ones, like the time he brought in assistant coaches and I didn’t want one. Just little ones.”

After a sixth-place finish in his first season, Pulford guided the Kings to third place last year. In the opening playoff round versus Chicago, the Kings lost in five games—but two of the defeats were 1-0. “I think we became a team then,” says Pulford. “We may not be as good a hockey club as our record shows, but we’re a good team and we proved it then. We proved we could play with any team.”

“We don’t get the recognition of the other top clubs,” he adds. “Some people still think we’re a fluke. When are the Kings going to collapse, they say. Well, I say don’t hold your breath waiting.”

Rogie Vachon is one of the three best goaltenders in pro hockey today; a diminutive five-foot-seven and 165 pounds, with a flowing moustache, floppy black hair and ever-twinkling eyes, he is, perhaps, the least likely netminder conceivable in Pulford’s system of assembly-line hockey-drones. Vachon is a volatile spark of energy, constantly on the move within his goal crease, skating impatiently, back and forth, back and forth around his net. He pounds his glove on his side, he tugs at his jersey. Only when the puck comes does he become transformed into a smooth, fluid trap, his glove hand like some sudden predatory insect,

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Kings

CONTINUED

snapping up the puck. When Vachon is good—and he is good very often these days—he is unbeatable; his goals-against average has been below 2.0 for most of the season.

The Los Angeles Kings don't score many goals and are usually out-shot. But with Vachon in the nets, even one Kings' goal may be enough. "I would have to say that without Vachon, the Kings could be in last place," says Flyers' coach Fred Shero. "If he gets injured, you can forget them."

"I'm colorful in goal, so I guess some people say that I'm the only player on the Kings," says Vachon, a French-Canadian with the rough, slurring accent to prove it. "I don't know about that. Our type of game doesn't make a lot of stars, but when you're winning, nobody bitches. It's smart hockey."

Rogie Vachon was derided as a "Junior-B" goaltender when he was first brought up by the Montreal Canadiens in 1966-67. He was considered too small, too free-spirited to star in the NHL. Vachon answered his critics on the ice: For five years, he was the Canadiens' number one goaltender.

Vachon was replaced by Ken Dryden in 1971-72. The number two, or three, spot didn't suit Vachon; he openly rebelled and was labeled a cry-baby. He also played the I-want-to-be-traded tune, popular among benchwarmers.

"When Dryden came in, they thought he was God," he says bitterly. "I knew I wouldn't get a chance. The thing that really got me mad was that they didn't tell me the whole story. Scotty Bowman (Montreal coach) is very unpredictable. He used to yell and throw things off his desk when I came into his office to talk. And he lied to me. Once, he told me that I was going to start a game and I got myself all psyched up.

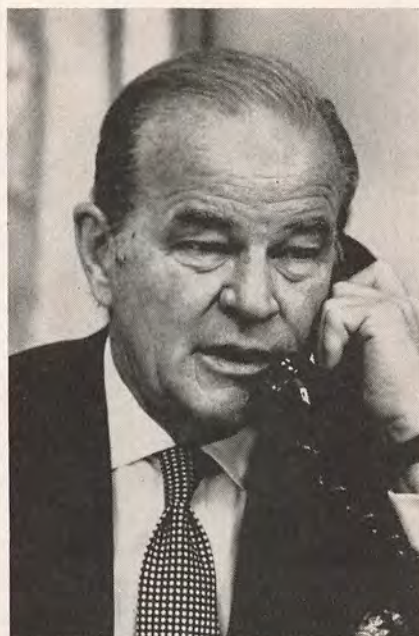
I walk into the locker-room before the game and he hands the puck to Dryden. I had to get out of there.

"When I first came to LA, we didn't believe in ourselves," Vachon adds, chomping on his cigar. "If we played Boston, we expected to lose. We only wanted to make a good showing. Now, it's a whole new game. I used to think we were really bad, but Pully never gave up on us. He was the only one. If it wasn't for him, I might be in the WHA now. I couldn't take losing anymore.

"I remember Jake (Milford) coming into the players' room

gone unnoticed compared to the other top goaltenders. Word of the Kings' success, and of Rogie's, hasn't reached the majority of NHL followers. National television, among other things, has shunned the Kings; they won't be featured on a regular season game of the week this year.

"I'm sick and tired of the lack of publicity I get," Vachon says. "It's a very tough thing to swallow. I just can't accept it. . . . I had my best year last year (2.80 with five shutouts) and I still went unnoticed. Back east, you get the publicity. I played for Montreal and I can bet you that I got more expo-



When Jack Kent Cooke (left) talks, coach Bob Pulford listens. So far, the owner-coach dialogue has been a pleasant one.

when he was named general manager last year," he continues. "He walked in and said, 'What the hell is going on here?' He said to start winning. It was a whole new approach." Vachon laughs. "I used to hear stories about playing in Los Angeles. I used to hear about the hot weather, the lousy fan support, the losing. To tell you the truth, I believed every word of it after my first year. We were just terrible and everybody knew it. But it's not so bad anymore, eh?"

Playing on the West Coast still has its disadvantages for Rogatien Vachon. Although he was named first team All-Star, Vachon has

sure in one year there than I've had in my four years here. In Los Angeles, I can honestly say that if I had forty-two shutouts in a row, I don't know if anybody would notice."

Jack Kent Cooke, for one, knows what it will take to end the anonymity. And befitting an owner who made his millions from newspapers and broadcasting, he's already concocted a headline to celebrate the event. "I can see it now," he muses. "Cinderella Kings Win Stanley Cup!" ■

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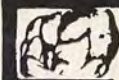


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On a Sunday afternoon in August of 1962 the habitués of that part of the Deep South where Florida, Georgia, and Alabama run together tuned in to the regional television station to watch the annual pre-season football preview featuring all-white Florida State and all-black Florida A&M Universities. The show, as usual, was co-hosted by FSU coach Bill Peterson and FAMU coach Jake Gaither. For nearly an hour, the coaches talked about years past and years future, narrating film clips and making bold predictions. FSU was just beginning to make its move toward becoming a first rate college football power, having just signed such future stars as Steve Tensi and Fred Biletnikoff. FAMU's Rattlers, on the other hand, had been the New York Yankees of black college football for a number of years.

At any rate, with a couple of minutes to pad out toward the end of the show, Peterson turned to Gaither with a question. "There's something I've been meaning to ask you for a long time, Jake," he said.

"What's that, Pete?" said Gaither.

"What do you think about this integration business?"

"To tell you the truth, I'm against it."

Peterson was dumbfounded. "You're against integration?"

"Sure," said Gaither. "Can you imagine how it'd mess up my football team if I had to play some of those white boys?"

That was the old Jake Gaither; the one who found it necessary, in that day and time, to play an occasional mischievous game of Step 'n' Fetchit in order to entertain the white folks who fed state money to his football program. It was that Jake Gaither who said he wanted his players to be "agile, mobile and hostile."

It was that Jake Gaither who said he didn't like players who were "good natured. I want 'em to knock 'em down, then stand over 'em and yell, 'I'm gonna eat you up.' Make 'em wish they'd never been born." It was that Jake Gaither who nicknamed the three platoons of his awesome teams Blood and Sweat and Tears, to the delight of the white folks around Tallahassee.

But those times are gone. (I remember my days as an undergraduate at Auburn during the 50s, when we figured the best entertainment available on a weeknight was to go watch the all black Lee County Training School play football at the shabby local stadium. White southern rednecks at the time, with no discernible stirring of racial justice yet in our bones, we sat together in a tight knot and howled as the public address announcer, who turned out to be the principal of the school, catered to the white fans with, "Oh, me, it's lookin' bad for the home team. A 19-and-a-half yard penalty for dancin' in the huddle.") Desegregation finally came, and suddenly such former all-white college powers in the South as Alabama and Georgia Tech and Tennessee began feverishly recruiting black players—not only in football, but in basketball and the other sports.

And so now, retired at 71 and still living down the hill from the University where he was head football coach for 25 years, Jake Gaither finds himself a symbol of the past. When he first came to Tallahassee as an assistant coach in 1937, A&M was brushed off as a "nigger school" and the men's dormitories were army barracks with a billboard out front saying, "These Buildings Will Be Replaced When Funds Are Available." The funds did not become available for a long while, but now

Florida A&M is a growing university of some 5,000 students (about seven per cent are white now, and two years ago, there was a white starter on the football team). Meanwhile, Jake Gaither became, during that era, the dean of black college coaches: Building a record of 203-36-4, and in one season alone being able to point at 37 ex-Rattlers in the National Football League. Early this year, he was named to the Football Hall of Fame.

"Do me a favor and don't quote me in dialect," he was telling a visitor recently. It was a Saturday afternoon and Gaither was watching college basketball on the television set in the living room of the modest brick house he has shared for two decades with his wife of 43 years. "Maybe there were times when I did talk like that, but that's not the way I really talk." Gaither attended a church-sponsored college in Tennessee where all but three of the 25 faculty members were "northern white liberals," and later earned a Master's degree from Ohio State. He adamantly continues to refer to his race as "Negro" rather than the more fashionable "black," and admits that "a lot of my friends get mad at me, call me old-fashioned for that, but I've been some places they haven't been."

Having been where he has been, and seen what he has seen, Gaither can only be optimistic these days. "How could I hate? It was a southern white doctor who saved my life years ago; gave me a \$1,000 operation on a brain tumor for \$100. The racial situation isn't entirely resolved, but now more and more Negroes are becoming first class citizens. I guess I touched about 2,000 Negro boys in my coaching years, and I was always proud to know most of them got their degrees and amounted to something. I always told my boys, 'Pay attention to the pork chops.' The pork chops are the basics: A job, a family, a car, food on the table, insurance. And another thing, if the racial issue is settled, it's going to be settled in the South."

Tired of talking, Gaither turned toward the television set for the rest of the Alabama-Tennessee basketball game. At the moment, eight of the ten players on the floor were black.



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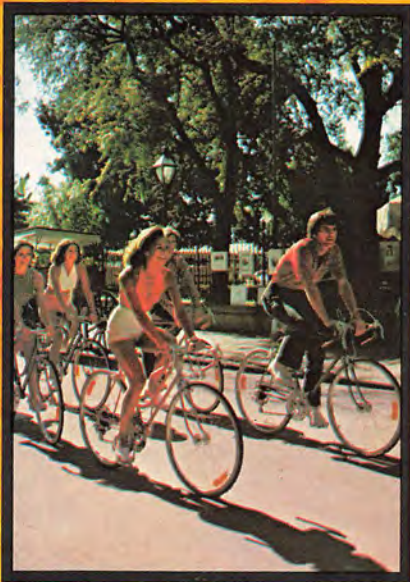


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March 22—Tour of Tybee Island, Savannah, Georgia

May 26—Kugler—Anderson Memorial, Somerville, N.J.

June 9—Fred Cappy, Senior Only, Detroit, Mich.

June 15—Keystone Open, Philadelphia, Penn.

June 15—Nevada City Criterium, Nevada City, Calif.

July 4—Holiday at Home, Fred Spencer, Junior Only, Newark, New Jersey

July 4—Park City Bike Classic, Park City, Utah

July 6—Art Longsjo Memorial, Fitchburg, Mass.

July 12 & 13—Summerfest, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

July 13—Manhattan Beach Grand Prix, Manhattan Beach, Calif.

Aug. 10—D'e Baets Race, Junior Only, Detroit, Mich.

Aug. 24—Wuchter Memorial, St. Louis, Missouri

Sept. 1—Tour of Kettering, Kettering, Ohio

Sept. 7—Tour of Canandaigua, Rochester, New York, Senior Only

Sept 7—Eugene Cycling Championship, Eugene, Oregon

Oct. 6—Tour of Santa Ynez, Santa Barbara, Calif.

Oct. 19—Tour of Indian Bayou, Indianola, Miss.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

July 26 & 27—Road, Milwaukee, Wisc.

July 30 - Aug. 2—Track, Northbrook, Ill.

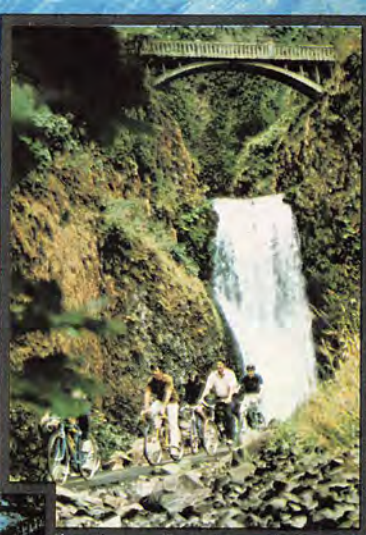
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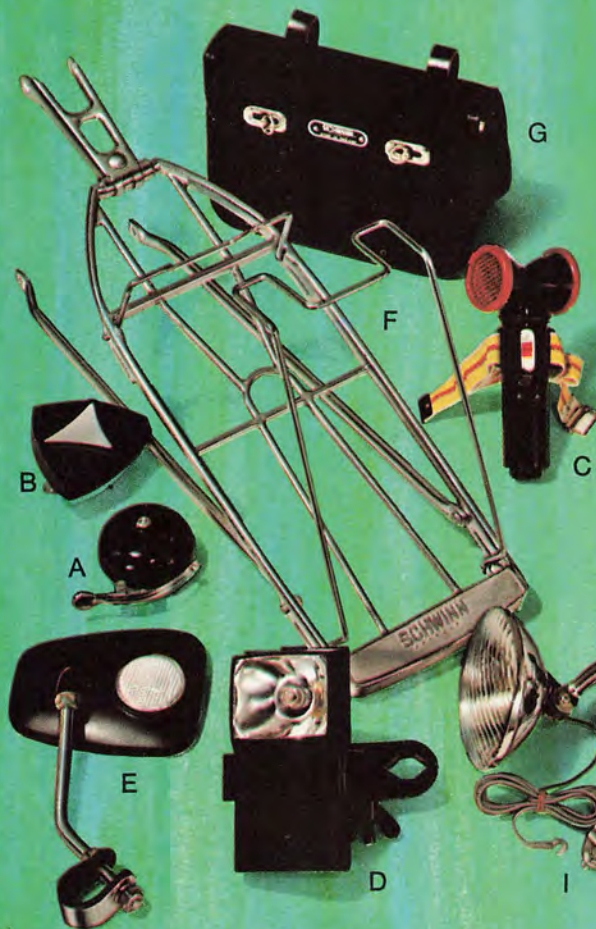
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